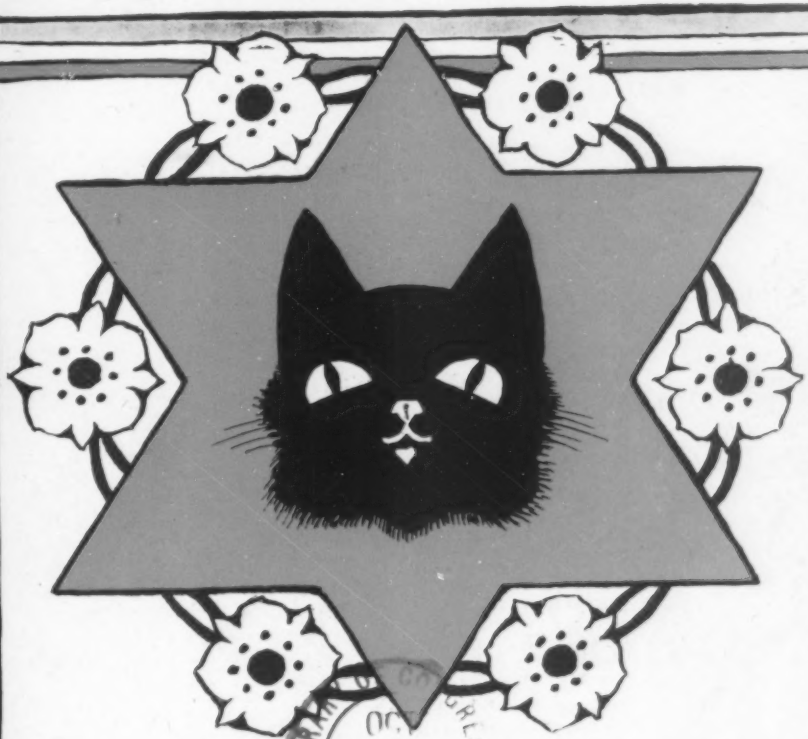
OCT 18 1915

The Black Cat



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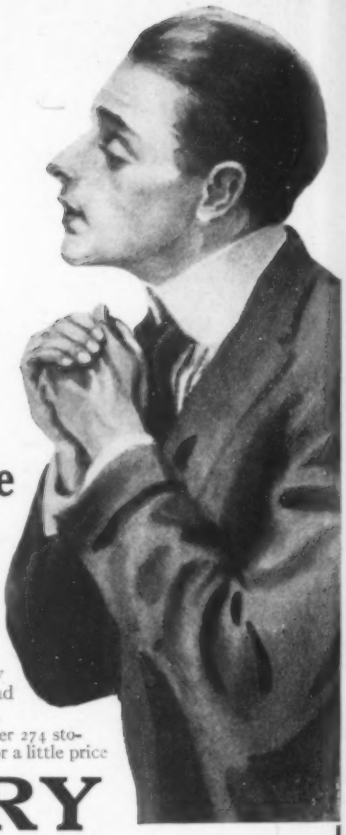

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THE YOUTH'S COMPANION, BOSTON, MASS.

Quilligan and the Magic Coin

BY HARRY STEPHEN KEELER

EUPHEMISTICALLY speaking, Quilligan was suffering from the toxic effects of a common grain derivative. Mechanically speaking, his condition was such that it required the expenditure of more than the usual number of ergs to maintain his center of gravity directly above his point of support. Geometrically speaking, he was travelling along the path composed of a series of horizontal curves, each of which was halfway between a catenary and hypocycloid.

For the ninety-ninth time, Quilligan was drunk!

Possibly Arabian Nights adventures happen only to those who are drunk. Perhaps not. Very likely there was nothing mysterious about Quilligan's peculiar adventure with the magic coin, considering its prosaic outcome. And, on the other hand—

But, we reiterate, Quilligan was drunk.

It was eight o'clock in the evening. Since five that afternoon he had been wandering aimlessly back and forth through the mazes of the Loop, vainly searching for one person. He had inquired in all-night drug stores and fly-by-night auction houses; in ten cent stores and salvation army soup kitchens; in pawnshops and penny arcades; in photo-postal studios and chop-suey restaurants; from traffic cops and blind beggars; from shooting galleries and home-scurrying shop girls; from chauffeurs and newsboys; from nickel show cashiers and street-corner shoestring merchants; from—

But the only result so far achieved had been the taking on of a cargo of the aforesaid grain derivative, each increment of which had drowned its inciting rebuff.

With such a rigorous search as this going on before our very eyes, it behooves us to investigate it a little more closely. Perhaps we can be of assistance—and thus stem the flowing tide of bitterness and booze that threatens to engulf Quilligan.

The object of Quilligan's search, it seems, was one August Heinze Shutenthaler, a friend of his boyhood days. Exactly forty-eight hours before, Quilligan received over the general delivery of the postoffice at Kokomo, Indiana, a postcard which proved to be from Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler himself. In it the latter announced that in two days he was opening up his new and glittering palace of free lunch and fiery liquor, bowing bartenders and bottled beer, in Chicago's downtown district, and that he hoped to see his boyhood friend, Quilligan, there on the opening night. In view of the fact that the postal had eluded the argus-eyed Mrs. Quilligan, Quilligan was in Chicago ready to greet his old friend, Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler. But

in view of the fact that he had forgotten to bring the postal carrying the address of the new and glittering palace of music boxes and matchless brew, brass railings and bottled rum, there was no Shutenthaler to greet—no Shutenthaler to find.

Earlier in the evening a sympathetic druggist had looked up the name of Shutenthaler in the city and telephone directories for Quilligan—and had found no entry whatever. So that trail, therefore, was nipped in the clue. Hence Quilligan was becoming discouraged. He longed to see Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler, with whom he used to paddle in the old swimming hole. He longed to see Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler's new and glittering establishment, and to imbibe a convivial glass with him. To return to Kokomo without seeing Shutenthaler would be no less than a—hic—crime.

For the ninety-ninth time, Quilligan perked up and approached a blue-coated traffic cop that loomed up in front of him from an alcoholic fog.

"'S this way, ossifer," he murmured. "'S m' fren' Shutenthaler. Shutenthaler—bran new s'loon—roun' here somew'ere." With a majestic sweep of his hand he indicated the whole 156 square miles of Chicago. "Here—somew'ere. Where'll I fin' Shutenthaler?"

"Now f'r th' third and last time," said the cop testily, "I'm tellin' ye it'll be roonin' ye in I will, do ye be troublin' me wid annymore quistions about y'r frind Shoohootenthaler. As I told ye wanst before, I know nahthing about anny Tootenshaler. If th' name's not in ather a 'phone directory 'r a city directory, thin I do be advisin' ye to consult a fortin-tiller—'r somethin' like that. Now be aff wid ye."

Sadly Quilligan turned away and resumed his wanderings along South State street. Always the same. No one knew anything about Shutenthaler and the new saloon. What a—hic—fool he had been for forgetting to bring that postal with Shutenthaler's location on it. What a shame to have to return to Kokomo without seeing the old friend of his boyhood days. The cop had advised him to consult a fortune teller. If he didn't get any better results than he had so far, he might consider the idea and—

He brought himself gradually to a position of oscillating quiescence. He stared. In front of him was the entrance of a rusty looking building, placarded all over with dentists' signs advertising gold fillings for fifty cents—and up. And, crowning all the tooth scenery, was a sign that held great potentialities for Quilligan. It announced that:

MADAME ASTRO
Revealer of the Hidden, Discloser
of the Future, Crystal Gazer,
Trance Medium,
Is to be found in Room
202—Walk up.

Special for today:
Crystal reading with trance: 50c.

Swaying back and forth like an inverted pendulum, Quilligan read the sign from beginning to end. Then he dipped his hand into his trousers pocket and brought up all that he

found there: two ten dollar bills, a silver fifty-cent piece, and a return ticket to Kokomo. So far, so good, With punctiliousness he returned the two tens and the ticket to Kokomo. And with the fifty cent piece clasped in his fist, he ascended a long flight of creaky, wooden stairs to a land of false teeth and gold fillings.

May heaven guard Quilligan and those two ten dollar bills in his mad journey through the jungles infested by the tooth vultures. If he ever knocks at the wrong door he'll come out minus the two tens and plus a diagnosis of nothing less than pyorrhea alveolaris. Ah—even heaven must be on the job, for he stops in front of Room 202. He knocks. Once more we draw a long breath, and pause while the story slides ahead out of the present tense.

A long delay followed Quilligan's knock. If he had been able to see through a wooden door panel he might have observed a huge, florid woman hastily hiding an ice-cold bottle of beer beneath a stand which carried a long black cloth and a great crystal ball. At the same time he would have seen her scrambling into a somber robe covered here and there with white crescent moons. But finally the door opened.

"Lookin' f'r a Madame Astro," said Quilligan, bowing through a small and safe angle.

She bowed in return.

"I am Madame Astro," she replied in clear, grave tones.

"'S m' fren' Shutenthaler," he explained concisely. "Can't locate Shutenthaler. Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler. Been ever'wher.' Thought I'd—hic—try fortune teller. Last resort, you know."

"Be seated," she commanded, beckoning him to a chair which stood in front of the crystal sphere. He dropped into it. Whereupon she closed the door and seated herself opposite him.

"Already I perceive that you wish the hidden revealed. I, Madame Astro, seer into the far, student of occultism, unveiler of the mysteries of the Orient, stand ready to help you. Speak, layman, speak—and—er—cross my palm with the sum of fifty cents. What wouldst know?"

Quilligan dropped the half dollar at the side of the crystal ball. Madame promptly performed the vanishing trick with it.

"'S m' fren' Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler," he elucidated. "Started new s'loon downtown. Jus' wan' fin' Shutenthaler. Thaz all. Thaz all."

Madame nodded understandingly and sympathetically. Madame realized that here was a victim, who, properly handled, was good for a double or even a triple fee. She commenced staring fixedly at the crystal ball. After a full minute had passed she began to sway gently from side to side. The swaying became more violent and then subsided, leaving her sitting stiff and rigid, her eyes glued mechanically to the transparent object in front of her.

Quilligan, rapt, watched her every movement.

Suddenly she leaned forward a trifle and commenced speaking in a dull monotone.

"I see—I see—I see—a—a—man. He is tall—and thin. He is clad in a

checked suit. He is seeking vainly for—for—for—something. Ah!—what that is—I cannot see. He asks everyone. They shake their heads. He stops. He appears discouraged. He stoops. He picks—picks up—picks up—ah, nothing less than the magic coin—the all-powerful coin of the four wishes. Ah, fortunate, fortunate mortal, to hold in his possession the magic coin itself. Does he know that four wishes shall that coin give to its owner before it loses its potency? Four wishes! Wishes for health, for fame, for riches, for love, for knowledge, for what not else. Does he realize that he holds in his hand a coin that a king's ransom could not buy? (Either that bottle of beer has gone to Madam's head—or else she's spreading herself.) Four wishes! Wishes to be used wisely. Wishes to be used foolishly. Ah, fortunate, fortunate mortal. But will he remember—will he remember the number 4? The magic number 4? Will he remember? Will he—"

Quilligan reached over and gently tapped Madame on the shoulder.

"All ver' nize—majick coin—four wizzes," he said thickly. "But how 'bout m' fren' Shutenthaler?"

Like a flash she relaxed. Her eyes opened wide. She stared stupidly about her.

"Idiot," she exclaimed, "you broke my trance. You snapped the most wonderful uninterrupted chain of vision I've had for a week. I could have told you everything you desired to know. As it is, it'll cost you another fifty cents."

Quilligan rose and pushed back his chair to the wall.

In Madame's second demand for cash he detected the faint creakings of a follow-up system. She was like all the rest. No one could tell him the answer to his problem: Where was Shutenthaler located? Without a word he walked to the door, opened it, and made his way down the squeaky stairs to the street. As for Madame Astro, however, she merely doffed her black robe, deposited her fifty cents in the Woman's National Lisle Bank, and resumed her bottle of cold beer.

Quilligan proceeded gloomily down the street. The clock on the corner of Van Buren and State showed the time to be 8:30 in the evening. Undecidedly, he paused, figuring whom to ask next. As he swayed to and fro in the breeze from the lake, the glint of something shiny met his eye. With infinite patience he stooped and picked it up. The light from the show-window of a nearby clothing store fell full upon it. A brief inspection showed him that his unsteady fingers held a bright metal disk on which the words were stamped:

Odd that, Quilligan ruminated. The crystal gazer; her vision of a tall, thin man in a checked suit picking up a

magic coin, her fatidical warning—"Remember the number 4"; her statement that the coin held exactly four wishes for its owner and then became valueless!

He scratched his head.

After which he clutched the metal disk in his hand and continued along the street, still picturing Madame Astro staring into the crystal sphere. All bunk, of course, he reflected. No such thing as a magic coin. No such thing as four wishes coming to a man in the 20th century. And yet—Well, he'd take a try at it.

"Lez see—lez see," he mumbled gravely to himself. "I wizz zat—zat—someone would—hic—walk up t' me and thrust a nize fat purse in my hand. Nize fat one. Nize fat one. Greenbacks—sparklers. Nize big one."

Scarcely had he covered thirty feet than a tall, thin young man with sandy complexion and a pair of steely blue eyes, stepped up behind him and apologetically tapped him on the shoulder.

"Beg pardon," he observed smoothly, "but—er—you must have dropped your purse. I came near holding on to it because of the hard times, but I've always—er—tried to be honest—so I want to hand it back."

Quilligan wheeled sharply. With amazement he looked down at the slim young man. His eyes travelled to the latter's out-stretched hand. Then they bulged out, for the hand was tendering him a fat leather purse, open just barely enough to disclose a bulky roll and a string of sparkling brilliants.

Only for a second did Quilligan hesitate. Then his own hand shot down into his trousers pocket and immediately reappeared, the fingers holding one of the two ten dollar bills. With the other he reached out for the purse.

"You're the—hic—honestest man in the city," he affirmed genially. "Don't see how I ever losht it. Ver' honest man, m' fren'!" He pressed the crisp ten into the slim young man's palm. The latter clutched it eagerly. "There's reward—small, triflin' reward—f' ver' honest young man." He jammed the bulging purse into his coat pocket and hurried around the corner.

As soon as he reached an alley he turned and made his way down it for a space of ten or twelve feet to a point directly beneath a hissing arc-lamp. Then he withdrew the purse and prepared to count the contents. But, to his dumfoundment, he found only a tight roll of narrow slips of green crepe paper—and a string of cut glass beads.

"Beau'fully, beau'fully stung," he murmured, after the explanation had gradually sifted in on him. "Stung beau'fully. Ol' game—and caught Quilligan from Kokomo al' ri'. Well, got my wizz anyway—nize fat wurse—but cosht me $10. That a majick coin, all ri', all ri'. Jus' goin' t' watch that coin."

He threw the purse and its contents in a dark corner of the alley; then he returned to the street.

He covered another block. By degrees he began to forget about the magic coin and to ponder once more about the question that had engrossed him all the evening: How and where was he going to find Shutenthaler?

Finally he stopped. The fact had dawned on him that it was high time to buy another drink—for there was still $10 left in the bank roll. But as he reached a decision in the matter, he caught sight of a big black negro, leaning nonchalantly against a doorway close by. Since the latter appealed to him as a possible source of information, he stepped over to him.

"'S m' fren' Shutenthaler," he explained. "Fren' Shutenthaler—"

"Shoot a dollah, sah?" interrupted the negro. "Yessuh." He peered carefully up and down South State street. Then he leaned over and whispered in Quilligan's ear: "Go straight to the fo'th flo' an' rap fo' times on the fo'th do'. Jes' rembah the numbah fo', sah."

Quilligan began the long, wearisome climb. Evidently he was on the trail of Shutenthaler at last. In turn he came to the second, the third, and finally the fourth and top floor. There he paused and counted the doors from the top of the stairway: one, two, three, four. He went down the hallway and rapped exactly four times on the fourth door. Instantly it swung open as if operated by an invisible genie. And as he walked in, it closed noiselessly behind him.

He peered around, discovered that he was in an immense room. At the rear of it was a long, green baize table, presided over by a black mustached man. Around the edges twenty or thirty men were crowded, some sitting and some standing, but all watching intently the spinning of a roulette wheel. With a sinking heart Quilligan realized that the wires of fate had crossed once more—and that he was as far as ever from the trail which led to Augustus Heinze Shutenthaler.

As he stood there irresolutely, his attention was riveted by one of the spectators at the green baize table raking in a handful of silver and paper money. That was interesting. So he stepped over, wedged himself in the spellbound audience, and began to watch the ceaseless play on the black and the red, the odd and the even, the high and the low. Soon he caught sight of the great square which was painted on the green cloth and divided into thirty-six smaller squares, each of which was numbered with one of the numbers on the roulette wheel. He turned to a man at his side.

"Whaz nummers for?" he asked.

"Sh-h-h," whispered his companion. "Go easy, pal, on th' gab. They're runnin' under cover here. It's this way, friend. You lay your mazuma on any number. If that number comes up on the next spin of the wheel, you get 36 times your stake."

With an effort Quilligan steadied himself, for he suddenly remembered the magic coin in his pocket—the coin with three more unused wishes. And he recollected at the same time that his total wealth was reduced to a lone $10 bill and a return ticket to Kokomo. Since his mission to Chicago had failed, here was a heaven-sent opportunity to go back to Kokomo with a roll big enough to choke the postmaster's mare. So he turned to the man at his side once more.

"'F I—hic—put $10 on the nummer—any nummer—" He paused. More and more he began to see that

he had nothing less than a half-Nelson on the Blind Goddess, for he possessed three A. No. 1 wishes as well as the red-hot hunch: Remember the number 4. "'F I put $10 on th' nummer 4—an' th' nummer 4 comes up—do I get $360, fren'?"

"Righto, pal," said the man addressed, watching with unconcealed admiration an individual who, drunk or sober, contemplated risking a ten spot on a 36 to 1 chance. "It's 36 times your stake on a number bet."

Majestically Quilligan reached down into his pocket. He gave the magic coin an admonitory pat. Then he drew up his last $10 bill. A number of the players were depositing their stakes on the colored squares. Quilligan leaned over and placed his piece of paper money on the square marked "4."

"I wizz," he said sternly, to no one in particular, "that the number 4 comes up."

The black mustached man looked around. All the bets were placed. So he gave the disk an energetic twirl. It spun swiftly, the black and red merging instantly into a hybrid color, and the ivory ball giving a sharp rattling noise like a machine gun on the banks of the Yser. The wheel ran with undiminished speed for a quarter of a minute. Then it began to slow down. Quilligan looked on fascinated, steadying himself on the shoulder of his companion. Still slower it turned. The ivory ball now began to bounce several spaces at a time. Slower and slower the wheel revolved. And finally, with a last saucy leap, the marble dropped squarely into the slot marked "4."

"Well, by Hectofer," said the black mustached man, smiling gamely. "Stranger, you win. The first number bet placed tonight. Gentlemen, didja ever see the beat of it for sheer—" Crash!

An axe blade shivered the panels of the door. The shrill sound of police whistles and men cursing began in the outside hallway. Instantly confusion reigned supreme inside the room. The black mustached man sprang to the electric switch and snapped it. In a trice the room was plunged into utter darkness. Blow after blow continued to smash in the door. Amid the sounds of splintering wood and falling plaster, some excited person tipped over the roulette table. Men shoved, fought, struck out, kicked and tripped over each other in their wild efforts to elude the gambling squad that was breaking in the doors.

"Quilligan, entangled in a mass of cursing, stumbling figures, found himself pushed and shoved through a small doorway. At once he felt a cool draught of air on his face. A second later he discovered that he was on a gravelled roof in company with twenty or more fleeing men. He saw his companions speed across the roof in the moonlight and disappear down a rusty iron fire-escape. So he followed, panting and sweating, because he was the last man. He descended hurriedly, swaying dizzily at every rung; but he clung on like a fly until he reached a dark alley. Here he threaded his way through a number of barrels and packing boxes, and finally came out on the brilliantly lighted thoroughfare. Five or six doorways down, he caught sight of a blue patrol

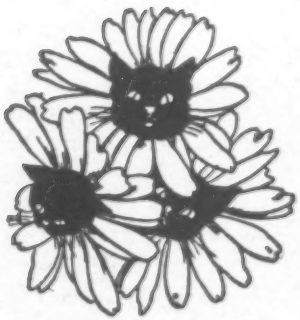
wagon backed up to the sidewalk, and a big crowd lined up from the curb to the building line.

He walked hastily in the other direction and soon found himself a block away from the scene of the excitement. Whereupon he leaned up against an arc-lamp post and made an effort to collect his fuddled wits.

At once he remembered that he hadn't had time even to collect his $360 winnings on his $10 bet. So he ruefully thrust his hand down into his pocket and drew up the magic coin.

"Y'r some majick coin, all ri', all ri'," he groaned. "Got m' firsh wizz—an' cosh me $10. Got m' shecond wizz—an' losh $10 more. Now I'm broke entir'ly." He paused, frowning at the coin. "Y're a big fake. Thought sho all th' time. Jus' a big fake, thaz all. I wizz I had jus' price of a drink—an' wizz I knew where I could fin' m' fren' 'Gustus Heinze Shutenthaler."

He flipped the metal disk idly over on his palm. Its reverse side read:



A Dog of the Streets

BY ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH

THE glass was brimmed with an amber liquid, refreshing to the throat and delightful to the soul; his lips were at the rim when the earthquake came; and Mateo woke to become conscious of a stiff toe being driven vigorously against his side.

He gulped the last drop of the dream-drink, scrambled into a sitting posture, and looked up into the pinhead eyes of Racca, the innkeeper.

Mateo had learned by long travail that when Racca's face was mottled, a wrathful condition of the innkeeper's soul was signified.

"Carrambos!" the innkeeper exclaimed in a hoarse monotone, and went on to say in a mixture of Mexican patois and bad Spanish: "Sleep! You do nothing but sleep! Listen!" He stopped. "The coughing Englishman, Marston, with the beautiful daughter, is here. He's in a hurry. He wants a man for his hacienda on the Quivino Road. I tell him—you. Watch out. If there's a chance to rob, watch for it; let me know, and I will tell Josè, see? Come!"

Mateo was fifty years old, bloated by much drink and long loafing; his head was bald; one leg was three inches shorter than the other; and his eyes were bleary; but he obeyed the command as if youth were still upon him.

He followed the rolling innkeeper through the dirty, greasy areas of the kitchen to the front of the inn, where, under the wide plaster arch, the Englishman sat in a drooping, lifeless attitude.

The tall gray-haired man shoved his glass from him, turned a thin face toward Mateo, that was empty of all joy of living, gave him but a glance from dull eyes, and beckoned him to follow.

Mateo was willing. Racca nudged him with an elbow, and Mateo nodded. He had played in many a dark game with the innkeeper, with the thin, vile José and the oily Mendel. The Englishman was a "lunger," fighting for life against consumption; he had purchased, so rumor had it, the tumbledown hacienda, and was planning to live there with his daughter, who had followed him from their northern home to help him fight the grim battle. It was whispered abroad, also, that Marston had been an easy mark in his trading. He would be an easy mark for Racca's scheming. Mateo knew what he was to do.

He would have preferred to sleep until the heat lessened; only a foolish Englishman would walk the streets until the sun was far down. But Mateo shrugged his shoulders, and the dim sense of objection passed. He never really objected; scorn and blows and kicks since boyhood had taught him better.

As Mateo went down the street behind the stooping Englishman, the

little *ninos,* beginning to appear for play, hailed him with taunts and nicknames, and he dropped his head and slunk on. All his life he had been a joke in Andres, the butt of fun and farce for old and young. In all the years he could remember, he had never received a kind word or look. Racca alone tolerated him, for Racca could use him.

Marston halted at the bank, and sent Mateo for the horses. When he returned with them, he looked up, his blear eyes expanded, and he gasped a little. On the steps of the bank stood the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. In her light riding-habit, the lithe, strong curves of her figure stood out; her hair was brown, bleached by wind and sun to a golden tinge in places; her eyes were brown, too. Mateo caught in them, as they rested upon him, an amused light but a kindly one, and he stared steadily.

"Mateo!" Marston said sharply. "Ride behind!"

The ride through the rolling country, across the dry flats, by the peculiar earth formation known as *La Santita,* to the hacienda was quickly made.

There Mateo began to gather the information that would serve José and incidentally began for the first time to really live.

A few days passed, and in them Mateo learned much that was important. Marston had money. There was no doubt about that. He was rapidly making the old, neglected estate into an attractive place. On rides with Miss Marston down the Quivino Road, Mateo listened to her friendly chat, and went through the novel experience of being treated as a man.

Marston gave him an automatic revolver of high grade make, and taught him how to use it. Mateo forgot he was the "Dog" as he had been in Andres.

But he remembered.

One afternoon, while dozing in the corner of the ranch-house he heard Marston say:

"I agreed to have the money here tomorrow morning for Morales; I agreed to pay cash for the land. I'm simply sick, and I'm going to send you in to the bank to get it. Mateo will go with you. Start back as soon as you can after the heat. I shall worry until I see you, but I don't see any other way to get the money here now. I expected to be stronger before—"

Mateo heard her clear, cheery laughter interrupt her father. "Cheer up, pater, old top. You're getting better every day. Mateo and I will go and get back!"

Mateo was smiling to himself and thinking of the pleasure of the ride, when he was seized with a sudden trembling that made him sweat. Racca, José, and the others! It would mean death for him if he did not tell them of the opportunity at hand; he had been sent out there for a purpose—to be a spy! Mateo shook in the shadow of his corner. He was afraid, mortally afraid. He remembered the night that Savas had died—the fall of José's hand, the thud—and the wrenching and gagging of the dying man in the little room in which he had been trapped.

Mateo scrambled to his feet, whispering, *"Jesus Maria!"*

Fifteen minutes later, with his very soul aquiver within him, he rode away

from the corral with the girl. Only one thought was in his mind: to see Racca and tell him what was on foot.

She was cheerful and happy. She looked over as they rode along.

"Mateo, you don't seem very cheerful!"

"No, Senorita, my life has been one of sorrow."

She smiled with amusement at the gloom in his voice.

"Weren't you ever in love?"

He shook his head.

"Well, I am," she answered, "in love with life!" I'll race you to the ridge."

Mateo's heart chilled as he rode in answer to her challenge. She was beautiful—and there was José.

In a back room of the inn Mateo explained to Racca and José the girl's errand in Andres; and he listened as José, his lean face hardening with greed and joy, planned the robbery.

"Look you, Mateo! We shall hide by La Santita—in the mesquite! As you pass by, I and Mendel will appear. See that she does not shoot. These northern senoritas are often quick with the gun. You shall have something for your share. Don't fail us! If you do—" José's teeth clicked hollowly behind his lips, and he went through the pantomime that suggests the knife thrust.

Mateo shook and sweated and hung back. "By Mary, I will do it!" he swore.

José grinned as he saw the other's fear, and nodded. "Now go. Remember!"

Mateo slid out the back door and around to the street. All his life, game for the children, their shrill voices greeted him with laughter as he limped along, and a piece of decayed fruit landed flatly upon his back. He turned with a threat, but paled as a few of the youngsters started belligerently toward him, and hurried on.

"Hail, Mateo, the Brave!" a musical voice chanted laughingly, and he, glancing around, saw the smiling face of a girl through an aperture in the abode wall. His head drooped at the mirth in her eyes.

A few steps brought him to the bank door, and there Miss Marston was waiting. She looked at him with pitying eyes.

"Why do they make so much fun of you, Mateo?"

"I am nothing, Senorita, just a dog of the streets," he answered.

She smiled as she swung into the saddle. "Mr. Eason told me that you wouldn't be of much use in protecting me, but I think you would."

Mateo glanced up furtively at the bank window, and he saw the keen eyes of the American cashier looking at him anxiously. He was evidently worried if she were not.

The door opened, and Eason said, "Miss Marston, I think I better go with you."

She looked back and her eyes were tender. "I'm safe with Mateo."

"I shall ride out tonight, however, or earlier!" he said quietly.

"Do," she answered smiling; and Mateo, watching under his eyebrows, knew that there was love between the two, and he guessed more—perhaps she did not have the money; perhaps Eason was to bring it out. Mateo was nervous.

They rode slowly to the outskirts of the town, and the horses picked up their pace.

A few miles farther, and, as if with one glorious sweep of a gigantic wand, the bright day changed into a golden dusk of moonlight and shadow. Now and then the girl stopped, breathless with the beauty of the change; and often on a ridge she would pause long to call Mateo's attention to the mountains far in the distance, their silvery snowy tops weirdly wonderful in the far flung moonlight.

Mateo listened and looked in silence. He saw not the mountains but *La Santita*, rising like the figure of a robed saint, beyond them. José and his partner were hiding in the shadow of the mesquite thickets at its base. Mateo knew his life was safe, but he was worried for two reasons: perhaps, she did not have the money after all; perhaps Eason might decide to follow immediately.

Thinking of these things, Mateo suggested that they hurry on, and she reluctantly agreed.

La Santita rose higher and sharper in outline as they drew near, and suddenly the shadow of the towering rock fell upon them. They turned to take the downward trail to the flats, and the horses slowed up. Here was the place!

The blood was pounding through Mateo's weak body. He watched with strained eyes and taut nerves; perhaps—

Two figures darted from the bush. The horses reared. The girl exclaimed sharply, then screamed in a voice that went through Mateo like the thrust of a knife, as she was dragged from her horse and thrown to the ground. Mateo watched her gasping struggle. She fought wildly at first, then gradually weakened. She spoke just once in a weak, spent, pleading voice: "Oh, Mateo, help me!"

They were using her roughly. The saliva in Mateo's mouth seemed to go acid. He stared at her. She was pinned on her face, and Mendel, José's partner, was binding her arms behind her.

José turned from the saddle-bags. His voice was harsh with threat. "The money isn't here! Where is it?"

Mateo cringed, and the horses he was holding shied as José stepped toward him. "I know not, José!"

"Search her!" José said angrily.

The girl answered faintly. "Don't touch me, you beasts! Let me go—I'll get the money if that is what you want!"

With one arm loosed, she drew from a fold in her skirt the package.

José seized it and laughed. "*Dios!* Here it is!" He shoved it into his shirt. "Now, hurry, put her on the horse," he snapped.

She caught his meaning. "You have the money—won't you let me go?"

José's lean face looked almost pleasant in the moonlight.

"You go!" he repeated in English, then said in Spanish: "We are going over the border to the Ralio Hills. From there we shall send Mateo to your father for money for you. If he does not send it—well, a rose was made for plucking; and you—are the rose!"

"You aren't so contemptible as that!"

He was bringing up her horse but turned at her words, catching her meaning if he did not understand her words.

"Would you look at me? Am I handsome? No! not in your eyes! But I shall have if I want it—what Eason would have!"

The girl murmured as she moaned; and at the sound something clattered in Mateo's soul.

He said fearfully to José: "José, you have the money, let the girl—"

Hard against Mateo's teeth came José's hard fist, and Mateo staggered.

"Peace, dog," José said sharply.

Mateo felt a warmish, sweetish something on his lips, and he knew it was blood. The clattering in his soul grew louder. He hoped Eason would follow soon; then his hope died as fear entered. Eason would discover what had happened if he went to the ranch; but if he did, and José's party were overtaken—Mateo shook with dread; it would mean death for him.

His terrified thinking was broken by José's command.

They started away, breaking sharply from the main trail, and taking the one that crossed the arid alkali waste beyond the river.

The girl swayed weakly in the saddle for she had undergone rough treatment; but José knew better than to force her to ride with him while her strength lasted.

Mateo rode behind. Only once did she turn to him, and then her faint words had shown no trace of anger, only a deep, dreadful pity—"Mateo, you poor, little coward!"

He had quivered at the scornful words and hung back until Mendel urged him on with a curse.

The dry powder began to drift up, and soon the girl called for water, but José did not stop. On they went, silent save for the low moans of the girl, the sound of hoofs on the soft trail, the creak of saddles, now and then the snort of a horse as he blew the clinging dust from his nostrils; around them the mighty spaces of the hushed southern night.

An hour passed, and the moanings of the girl grew into broken mutterings that almost seemed, and yet were not, the speech of delirium. Mateo heard her speak her father's name again and again with a love and yearning that made his small soul sick within him. Before her might lie something that was worse than death, and the chances were, Mateo knew, that it might come; for José was infamous in more ways than one. Moreover, Mateo knew he would never dare to carry a message to the ranch, for the Englishman would kill him; if he did not, there was the American, feared throughout the section, who might even then be pressing on their trail.

The girl aroused herself and begged piteously for water.

"José!" Mateo called hesitatingly, "won't you give—"

José turned and said savagely: "Peace, you! There is none! Peace—or you sleep long!"

Mateo, already dumfounded at what he had heard himself say, for he had spoken before he thought, sank into quick silence.

Another hour passed—an hour of the same terrible desert silence and the girl's low talking to herself. She was drooping far over the saddle, and her

hair had fallen like a veil about her. Mateo caught his breath as he watched her.

Soon the trail grew harder under foot; hills loomed sharply and suddenly. They climbed a ridge, and beyond it Mateo saw a small valley. In the center a small spot gleamed like a pool of silver. His parched mouth opened in a murmur of joy—"Del Carto." It was the famous spring of which he had heard many tales.

The horses caught the scent of the water and hurried on. Soon it lay before them, down in a deep cut.

José and Mendel gave their reins to Mateo, and slid down to the pool.

Mateo stepped beside the girl's horse. "You shall soon have water, Senorita," he said softly.

The girl lifted her sagging head; clear consciousness seemed to come to her at the familiar sound of his voice; she stared at him with eyes that were bright and wide in the moonlight. In a tone that started the clattering again in Mateo's soul, she whispered:

"Mateo, oh, Mateo, Mateo, if you were only a man!"

"A man, Senorita? I am a man," he answered in surprise.

Then he understood how she had used the English word. He looked up into her face, white in the moonlight and he swore softly.

"I not a man!" he muttered slowly. Through the shrunken cells of his brain a flaming, cleaving word passed, that turned into a cry: the answer of the male to the cry of the hunted female, old as the jungle, deep as life.

His lips drew tight over his teeth; a warm something came from his lips again, from the reopened bruise where José fist had landed.

"I not a man!" he muttered, and something seemed to burst within him into roar and flame.

José and Mendel were drinking slowly, and therefore wisely, stopping to rest, then drinking again; their thirst was great. José was sprawling on the spring's edge, as was Mendel. The two dark figures against the brightness of the silvery pool made two splendid targets, and the automatic was hair-triggered.

Mateo drew it from its holster. The dull barrel caught the moonlight and rested in a line on José's chest.

In that brief moment, that partook of eternity, the clattering in Mateo's soul died to a beautiful peace; he heard the girl's low gasp of great wonder and understanding; he ran his tongue across his battered lips; he did not tremble—he was a man!

With a sigh of some new, deep, rich content, he touched the trigger once—twice.

Co-op Co-operates

BY HARTLEY EDINGTON

MR. Carew, who was destined to be Mrs. Mish's new boarder, did not understand the neighborhood co-operative plan, so Mrs. Mish went over the explanation again. He listened attentively. He was a slim young man, and his collar was clean. Mrs. Mish felt sure that just so he didn't want to smoke in bed he would be a desirable boarder. He seemed a little skeptical about the co-operative plan, however.

"Now do I understand it?" he suggested. "It's a neighborhood co-operation, and you each let your neighbors use certain things you have in return for the use of certain things that they have."

"Yes, that's right."

"And there are three families of you, you say? Well, don't you ever happen to want the same thing at the same time? I would rather think so. The 'phone for instance?"

"Oh, not often," cried Mrs. Mish eagerly. "Now you see, I have the telephone and a lawn mower and sewin' machine. Then Mrs. Dagget—that's her next door. She ain't got any husband, but she's a remarkable good manager—well, Mrs. Dagget's got a horse and buggy and carpet-sweeper. Then the Carters live in the next house. They've got a bath tub, a washin' machine and a piano. And any time the Daggets or Carters want to use any of the things I've got—the 'phone or lawn mower, et cetery—they just come and use it. And whenever we want to use any of the special things they have, we do the same. It's been going about two months now, and we think it works fine, so far."

"I see. Ah, what's the horse like, anyhow? Can it travel?" Mr. Carew yawned, just the least bit.

"Well, it's kind of a sawed-off looking animal, but the buggy has a red plush seat. We think Co-op is quite a horse all right, though I think she needs a tight rein."

"Co-op?"

"Oh, yes, Co-op is the horse. She sorta belongs to all of us in the co-operative plan, you know, so we call her Co-op. Miss Carter—lives in the third house where they have the bath tub, and washin' machine and piano, you remember—well, Miss Carter, Miss Catherine, thought of it."

"Ah, well— Miss Carter, did you say?" Carew waited hopefully.

"Oh, yes, Miss Carter. She's very nice. She reads Emerson, and crochets beautiful." However, Carew decided to remain.

Arranging his dressing table, up in his room that same night, he heard a strange voice 'phoning downstairs. It was harsh and strident, with few feminine accents. Carew mentally constructed a body to go with it—wiry arms, a flat bosom and a large stubborn head. Then there would be

prominent blue eyes, and straight stiff hair, with a loosened fringe hanging out across the back of the neck. Carew was—to make matters clear—an agent for a reliable, quite reliable, make of aluminum ware, and had learned to connect women's figures and voices. He sifted from her deaf-pitch remarks that it was Mrs. Dagget, the husbandless owner of the horse, buggy and carpet sweeper.

He was tired tonight, dead tired. A hot bath, and a good rub, ah, that would set him up. Oh, rats! No! there wasn't any tub in the house! To get a bath, he supposed, he'd have to go traipsing down to Carters'—Carters', yes, he believed that was the name—and inquire about their co-operative tub. Lug along bath towels, too, he presumed. He recalled Bo-Peep's sheep "bringing their tails behind them," only it would be bath towels and clean hose and fresh linen for him.

Well, he'd soon have this district canvassed. He was glad Miss Carter was the Emerson and crochet kind. Wouldn't it be great, going down for a co-operative plunge with a Men's Furnishings Department draped over his arm, if she was cute, you know, and read this Robert W. Chambers sort of stuff.

He might as well let the bath go tonight, he guessed. Two a week would have to do. Lucky he didn't care about lawn mowers, or carpet-sweepers, or pianos. Probably Miss Carter couldn't play anything but "Revive Us Again." Of course there was Mrs. Dagget's horse, he admitted, but he doubted the need of a tight rein.

As he descended softly the next morning, a conversation was going on in the dining-room. Another unknown voice—a woman's—not Mrs. Dagget's.

"Oh, Mrs. Mish! You don't say you have a boarder?"

"Sure enough, Catherine. You must certainly meet him." It was Miss Carter then. Carew stuck out his mouth peevishly.

"I bet it won't do no good," put in Mr. Mish. "I bet he's took already."

"I'll be having to 'phone a dozen times a day," gaily declared Miss Carter. Carew yawned. Then he stepped into the room.

He found himself presented to a straight, small girl with velvet eyes. While he held her hand, he decided that her throat was good, and her color better than he had lately appraised. She took him in calmly, which was hardly fair. She should have looked away, and murmured of the weather.

"I hope you'll like it here," she said. "I understand you will be here several weeks." Her voice, he decided later, was like cool beads of falling quicksilver.

"Yes," he assented eagerly.

"Well, just call when you want to use the—the—the washing machine!" she invited airily.

After she had gone, he tried to readjust. Emerson! She didn't talk it or look it. Crochet! Was that lovely low collar-affair she had on, crochet? Why, he thought only frumpy old ladies crocheted, and then they did bedspreads and these clock-shelf tidies.

On his request, Mrs. Mish gladly promised to take him down to Carters' that very evening, so he could be properly introduced to the family and get "the bearings of that co-operative tub," as he put it.

"We'll go early, and get Catherine to play and sing some for us," she suggested.

"Fine! A piano is a great thing. I'm lost without one within range."

It was a shimmery Sunday afternoon some weeks later, and in Mrs. Dagget's buggy with the red plush seat, were Carew and Catherine Carter. Co-op ambled contentedly with flopping rein. Miss Carter fanned herself with Carew's straw hat, while he switched the weeds with Mrs. Dagget's new fifty-cent whip. They were trying to co-operate.

"Do you know, I don't believe the co-operative plan will last much longer," she said suddenly.

"Why?"

"Because Mrs. Dagget isn't playing fair."

"What's the matter?"

"Well, she keeps Mrs. Mish's sewing machine when she needs it herself, and breaks up all the needles and never gets any new ones. Then she uses the co-operative 'phone outrageously. She conducts all of her business over it. Mrs. Mish had to call her to the 'phone seven times yesterday. What's more, Mishs' lawn is all dying because the co-operative hose and lawn mower are always at Daggets' when Mr. Mish has time to use them."

"You didn't mention the co-operative bath tub," said Carew deliberately. "How many hours a day does she bask in it? And the co-operative washing machine—does anyone ever get a chance to play on it, besides her? And I believe that little cub Johnny of hers was over amusing himself on your piano last night from seven till ten, while we had to sit on the porch and feed the mosquitoes."

"Oh," she explained generously, Mrs. Dagget is just a born manager, that's all. They say she managed Mr. Dagget into realms of glory. Anyhow, she feels she must get her money's worth out of this co-operative plan—and she's doing it!"

"Well,"—Carew flicked the grass idly, "why don't all the rest of you run her even? Why don't you all use her things just as much as she does yours? Let's see, she has the carpet-sweeper, and the horse and buggy, and—"

"That's all! And do you see me frolicking with the carpet-sweeper many hours a day, when the thing leaves a trail of desolation every time you forget and run it backward? Of course there's Co-op—"

"Gosh! Just listen to this!" broke in Carew. "I've got an idea!"

"Don't let it escape."

"Well, listen! You and I ought to convince Mrs. Dagget that she is mis-using the Co-operative plan. See? And the way to do it is for us to use Co-op every spare minute. Just keep old Co-op on the hump; especially evenings and Sundays, which is the only time Mrs. Dagget would stop long enough to ride. See? If we don't do something, the plan will break up, and everyone will lose the advantages. It's up to us!" Carew was really eloquent.

"Oh, yes, I see! But I hate to plot against Mrs. Dagget that way. And then, she likes you, too. She told me she did. She said it was because you didn't try to sing, and admitted you could milk a cow."

Carew bowed stiffly. "Oh, it won't take long to impress her. Come on—or does Emerson think that shrewd ladies should be allowed to bask in co-operative tubs as long as they're a mind to?"

"You are nearly horrid! And Emerson doesn't mention such indelicate things as bath tubs. But just this once"—after a pause—"well,—I'll be persuaded. On with the reform!"

"Very well. We'll begin now. I think we'll not put Co-op into the stall before half past eight tonight. There's a grand view about five miles up the road, I suspect."

Mrs. Dagget's light was out when they came back. That lady was a little surprised, when she came to use the co-operative 'phone the next morning, to learn at what hour Co-op had been stabled the night before.

"All right," she said shortly. "Co-op needs drivin', I guess. She's gittin' too fat. She's et up twicet as much grain as Barnes' mare this month."

Wednesday night Carew and Miss Carter had the horse and buggy out till eleven-thirty. Mrs. Dagget had planned to drive down to the Tax Payers' Mass Meeting. She waited until ten for them to return, and then grumbled to bed.

Another Sunday afternoon, and the conspirators were giving Co-op her time along the river-side drive. They had left home as soon as it was time for Mrs. Dagget to take the one day-time nap that she allowed herself per week.

"How do you think we are succeeding?" he inquired. "One woman never understands another, I suppose. But she's got it over a mere man even then."

"I am afraid I see the co-operative plan going on the rocks in another week," sighed Catherine. "Dad isn't rabid about taking baths anyhow, and he declares he *will not* take 'em in cold water, or with a chorus of Daggets at the door all crying: 'How soon'll you be out?'"

"Well," he admitted, "I was afraid our system hadn't dawned on her. If we can only impress her quickly, we will yet save the co-operative plan, and get to use Co-op a lot, too. But we will not stop yet. What would Emerson say to a jaunt around by the new macadam road, and back by Dodd's Bridge—home about ten, since she wanted to drive to church to-night—eh?"

"Emerson says," declared Catherine bravely, "that we should—should worry."

One Wednesday afternoon, shortly afterward, Catherine was sitting in the middle of the dining-room floor, frowning into the workings of the co-operative carpet-sweeper. Carew rushed in.

"Listen, Catherine," he explained hurriedly, "I'm going to lay off this afternoon, and can you go out for a little ride, right away? Sure, of course you can. Well, you go right over and talk to Mrs. Dagget and keep her in the front room while I get Co-op out of the barn. I'd rather she didn't know we were going, just

for fun, you know, Catherine!"

"Yes. But I don't see the point."

"Well, you see, Mrs. Dagget was in 'phoning at Mishs'," he stopped suspiciously and looked at Catherine, "but really there isn't any point except as usual. Just go along!"

"Maybe she won't be worked."

"Yes, she will. Let her tell you about how she got bit by the last travelling photographer who wanted to enlarge Mr. Dagget. Come back in ten minutes. I'll be waiting on the other side of the house."

"Mrs. Dagget was awfully excited about something," exclaimed Catherine, as they whacked Co-op into a lumbering gallop. She looked back to discover gleefully that they were not observed.

"She was?" faked Carew. "Oh, I guess not. You imagined it, Catherine."

"No, I didn't. She was flying around dusting everything, and she had on a look—well, on anyone else I'd vow it meant, 'Land sakes, what am I going to wear?'"

"Oh, tell that to—to Co-op!" scoffed Carew. "Over the hills and far away for us, and if Mrs. Dagget gets too excited she can cool off under the co-operative hose. I think it has been at her place a month. Move on, Co-op! That's a beastly crawl for an animal that's 'et' as much grain as you have this month. Say, but this red plush is hot!"

"Seems to me Co-op *is* awfully slow today," said Catherine, after an hour of cool and fragrant dallying along the river road. They were just emerging into the afternoon glow. "That's the third time she has stopped stock still."

"Lazy!" pronounced Carew, bringing down the whip. "Needs a little of the whale-bone, you see." Co-op started up draggingly, but soon settled back into an irritating poke.

Early the following morning, on her own back porch, stood Mrs. Dagget, before a little group of people. The group consisted of the three co-operative families with their attaches—the Mishs' boarder and the Carters' dog. Mrs. Dagget had summoned them all hither, herself. Carew alone, thought he knew what was going to happen. Catherine suddenly suspected that he did, too.

Mrs. Dagget's hair was, as usual, at half-mast fringe. Her top hair was pitched too far forward, and her wrapper—some women are born so—was short in front. Her shoes were decrepit and milk-spattered. But her glance was splendid.

"Well!" she began tersely, "we'll get it over quick. Listen! I guess Mr. Carew and Miss Catherine don't know that they took Co-op off yesterday when I wanted her worst, when I simply had to have her!" She shot a glance at each, but missed the sudden gleam that flashed over Catherine Carter, and Carew's well-done concern.

"Well! This is why I wanted her: my cousin telephoned long-distance, yesterday, that she'd be in on that four o'clock afternoon train—right in the heat of course—and wanted me to meet her, as she wasn't much of a walker, and had lots of baggage. Well! I went to hitch up before I dressed. No horse! No buggy! Mad—I could a relished clam shells. I got

dressed anyhow. I was gettin' madder every minute.

"Well! little after three I saw I'd have to walk. I started. Hot! I looked like pudding before I got six blocks. And I was tired out, and my skirt kept wadin' up around my knees, till I could a tore it off. And think of the time I was wastin'!" she paused to cool. No one spoke.

"Well! I got there, and Jane come. She's forty pound heavier'n when I saw her last. Walk back with me? She couldn't a walked twenty yard with them hat-boxes and valises and that narrow-gauge skirt. And she *wouldn't,* either. She wouldn't budge. So we visited till the next train come, and Jane clumb right on. And I don't know as I blame her either. She was only going to stay a day, anyhow.

"Well! When I got Jane off my mind I started back. Then I began to boil some more at Mr. Carew and Catherine. Oh, but I was mad! If I could a had a holt of 'em—but suddenlike it comes to me, do they use Co-op any more than I do all their things, the grass cutter 'n hose, 'n 'phone, 'n bath tub, 'n piano. And come to think about it, everything on the list that was movable was at my place right then, and had been since I don't know when. Say, that cooled me off some, and I begun to hope that you folks hadn't ever noticed.

"Well! by the time I got home, I wasn't mad much. Course I got to thinking that now I wouldn't be out the meals that Jane didn't eat—and she's an awful eater. That made me feel better.

"So I want to say public that I been careless, and now I'm going to be a little more reasonable, and—"

She was interrupted by a sharp insistent cry from the barn. Johnny Dagget had wandered off. It was his voice:

"Ma—ma! Ma—ma! C'mere quick. Co-op's dead! Hey, can't you hear? Co-op—is dead!" He appeared at the barn door, and the frightened incredulous group flowed upon him. "She won't move, and her legs all stick out stiff!"

They huddled about in the stall. Poor Co-op lay stark and inert, already stiffened into ugliness. Mrs. Dagget stooped over the horse in a daze. She passed a slow hand over Co-op's neck and head and side. " 'Fraid she died a-hurtin'," she said huskily.

"Gosh!" groaned Carew, when they were outside again. He was thinking of how Co-op had lagged along the dusty roads yesterday, and how they had urged her. Perhaps Catherine was thinking of the same thing.

"Say, Mrs. Dagget," he did not falter—"I guess I drove old Co-op yesterday too——"

"Don't talk about it now," commanded Mrs. Dagget, waving her hand. "Paw owned Co-op's mother, and she died same way, now that I think of it. I'll have to git her hauled off, though. Poor old thing! I wonder who'll do it cheapest? Well, won't have to feed her any more. It'll break up the co-operation though, folkeses, I guess. Well, well! And just after I had reformed, too." She chuckled grudgingly, like a pebble rolling in a box.

"I'll see to having Co-op taken away myself, if you like, Mrs. Dagget," said Carew earnestly.

"Well, now! that's kind," nodded Mrs. Dagget briskly. Truly Co-op's death was almost turning into a source of profit; for there was the hide. She ought to get six or eight dollars for it.

And not only did Carew provide for Co-op's last rites, but with Catherine's help he planned a farewell party for the disorganized co-operative plan. He ordered a freezer of ice cream and fancy cakes from down town, and they invited all the neighbors and talked Mrs. Dagget into graciously consenting to act as hostess.

Mrs. Dagget wore her black dress —with her hair in a fringe at the back—and served elegantly. Everybody had a great time, and there was lots of ice cream.

Sitting cosily tete-a-tete on a quilt-covered bench under the stairs were Carew and Catherine.

"If you weren't going away so soon, I'd tell you that you were cruel, positively inhuman to Mrs. Dagget."

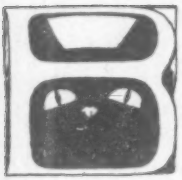
"You just say that, Catherine, because I didn't dare tell you beforehand, all about it. Really, who's the worse? We've had lots of nice rides —haven't we, Catherine? Mrs. Dagget is happy, and now even Co-op is better off."

Just at this moment they heard Mrs. Dagget washing dishes. "Let's go help her," she whispered.

"Say," exclaimed Mrs. Dagget happily, as she thriftily removed the soap from the dish water, "I've just had a good idea. Do you know what I'm going to do with the buggy? I'm going to sell it and have a bath tub put in—not a co-operative one this time."

The Breeding of Hate

BY FRED A. BARROW



IG Dick Rand, sometimes called "Lonesome," looked solemnly at the boy standing before him and slowly shook his head. Then he turned to throw a piece of oil-soaked railroad tie on the fire that burned at the entrance of the shelter beneath the big rock.

"You mustn't do it, kid; you mustn't do it. To kill any man's bad enough, but to kill your own father—that's the limit. It's again' all law an' religion. Forget it, Cariboo, an' sit down."

"He killed my mother," said the boy almost in a whisper.

"Ay, you've told me that before, an' the boys have told me, an' it's them that's kept your hate a-burnin'; an' it's wrong, Cariboo, dead wrong. It ain't natural for a lad of sixteen to go around with the fire of hate burnin' him up; an' the devils that has fed the flame'll have to account for it some time."

Rand sat down on a water-worn boulder near the fire, and taking out a corncob pipe from his dirt-grimed overalls he filled and lit it and began to smoke.

The lad gazed dreamily across the seething and hissing waters of the Frazer to where a mountain rose darkly from the opposite bank and reared itself to touch the starlit sky. He was a handsome boy, tall and straight, with his form just squaring into manhood. His blue eyes and rounded forehead were like those of a woman, but his jaws were hard and firm-set. He spoke now, like one reciting a lesson.

"He killed my mother," he repeated. "He came to the cabin at night, drunk, and went to bed. And in the night he told mother to get him a drink of water, but there was none in the cabin. Then, while mother hunted for a pair of shoes so she could go out through the snow to the well, he cursed her for being slow, and took a gun and shot her. I saw it. I saw it all. I saw her blood stain her nightgown. I saw it all and I could do nothing because I was too small, but I swore—"

"Sit down!" interrupted Rand, almost fiercely, and the boy obeyed. Then the man pointed down the river to where, by the light of the fire, one could see the rocky banks close together, forcing the waters to pass through a channel not eighteen feet wide. There they rose in fierce tumult, roaring and fuming at the narrow bounds they were forced to pass. "Yonder is Hell Gate," he said sternly. "You hear, boy, how it howls an' roars? Well, it's Hell Gate that waits for the devil that killed your mother, only a hell of fire, not water. You leave him to the A'mighty; He'll look after him all right. I've taken a notion to you, boy, for some reason or other, an' I'm goin' to keep you by me an'

see that you don't get your hands stained in somethin' that won't wash out. It says somewheres that all murderers will have their portion in the lake that burns, or somethin' like that. I'm no sky-pilot, but take it from me, boy, it's a true sayin'."

The boy's hand rose to the bosom of his blue flannel shirt and grasped some object hidden beneath.

"Mother used to read things like that to me out of the Book. She was goin' to teach me to read, too, but he—"

Big Dick rose and laid his hand firmly on the lad's shoulder.

"There; don't say anything more about *him*, Cariboo. Remember your mother always, but forget him. There's your blankets. Tumble in, now. Listen to those wild devils up in the bunk car, boozin' an' drinkin' an' playin' cards. That's all they care for. The air's some sweeter down here. Better for me an' better for you, ain't it, son?"

From up above them on the railroad siding, where lay the cars of Dawson's rock gang, came faintly the sounds of oaths and cursing and ribald songs.

A voice from above hailed the two by the fire, and looking up Rand saw the boss's shadowy form at the edge of the steep embankment of broken granite.

"You an' the kid gone to your downy beds yet, Lonesome?"

"Not yet, Dawson. Leastways, I haven't. Cariboo's just gettin' into his blankets. What you walkin' the track for, boss? Too noisy on the cars?"

"Noisy nothin'!" responded the boss, scornfully. "It'd take more than that to keep me from sleepin'. No, I'm just waitin' for the new dynamite man who's comin' to take the place of Rory. If he don't come pretty soon I'm goin' to turn in."

"Where's he comin' from?" inquired Rand.

"From the Bend. 'Speck' they call him. A charge of giant blew off in his face, an' they say it's near blue with powder marks. An' they say his temper's about as homely as his face. Comin' up for awhile?"

"No; I guess I'll keep the fire company for a while an' then turn in. I'm feelin' kinder tired."

With a grunt Dawson retreated from the edge of the declivity and the sound of his steps grew fainter as he walked down the railroad track.

Rand sat down on a flat piece of granite, one of many fragments that had been blasted from the mountain side to make room for the tracks of the Canadian Pacific, and gazed alternately from the fire to the boy lying beneath the big rock. The fire was burning brightly, the flames lighting up the extreme wildness of the surrounding locality, the steep, jagged cliffs, the pitching and foaming water, and the narrow spit of rock that curved in toward the river, its point forming one of the pillars of Hell Gate. The boiling, leaping waters looked red in the firelight, suggesting a Dorean picture of the entrance to Hades.

After a while Rand spoke.

"Are you asleep, Cariboo?" he asked.

"No;" answered the boy. "I was just thinkin'."

"'Bout what?" demanded Rand.

"'Bout you," said Cariboo. "I was wonderin' why you never got married. Didn't you ever love a woman?"

"Whatever put that question in your mind, kid?" inquired Rand, looking curiously at the lad.

"Well," responded Cariboo, "you're strong an' able; you're a good-looker; you don't drink or gamble and you're kind. Ain't that the kind of man a woman wants?"

The big man turned and stared into the fire, his eyes half closed.

"Yes, that's the kind of a man some women likes. But all women aren't the same, Cariboo. Some of them are like angels; they'd sooner take some devil of a man an' try to reform him than marry a ready-made angel, like me." Rand laughed quietly. Then, seriously, "But you struck me in a tender spot that time, boy, for there was a woman once, one I'd have laid down my life for. We quarreled over some trifle that I've forgotten, and I left her. That was nigh twenty years ago. I came back to Kamloops to look for her two years after, but she'd left the town. She was the best woman in the world, boy; one of the angel kind I spoke of. I sometimes think she'd have thought more of me if I'd have been more of a terror."

"Do you love her yet, Big Dick?" asked the boy.

"You betcher, son. An' I'm in hopes that some day I'll find her. Then, if she'll have me, I'll marry her, an' you'll come an' live with us. I've saved up a little dust—enough to buy a nice little fruit farm that you an' me could work comfortable."

"You're a good feller, Dick," said the boy softly, then he turned over in his blanket and fell asleep.

For some time afterwards Big Dick Rand sat musing. The boy had for some reason or other wrapped himself around his heart. Often the lad had spoken of his mother, of her tenderness to him and of her patience with the drunken reprobate, his father, and Rand had listened and his big heart had ached for the lad. The boy had grown up wild and untutored, with but one passion—the primitive and terrible passion of hate—dominating his existence. This passion Rand had tried in many ways to dull, but so far ineffectually. Oh, if he could only find his old sweetheart, "the best woman in the world!" Mary, the woman to whom his love had been faithful for twenty years! If he could only find her and take the boy away to some place where wholesome surroundings and her goodness would have their effect. If he could only find her, the sweetest woman he had ever known!

He turned to look at the sleeping lad. He lay with his hand in the bosom of his shirt, sleeping heavily. Rand had noticed this attitude of the boy several times, and decided that he was secreting some weapon. Out of fear of antagonizing the boy he had refrained from asking him what the object was he so carefully guarded. Now he decided to find out.

Stealthily he crept in beside the sleeper. The boy felt his presence and moved, and his hand came from the bosom of his shirt, holding a book

—a small New Testament.

"So that's what the kid's been guardin' so careful," muttered Rand. Then after a pause, "Must've belonged to his mother."

Cariboo's hand moved and the Testament fell open at the fly-leaf on which a name was written. Rand stooped forward, while a flame from the fire shot up, lighting the interior of the little cave. The man read, then started back with a hoarse cry.

"God!" he gasped, "it's Mary's book—an' the boy's her boy!"

For a moment he kneeled there, his whole frame quivering, while red and black clouds blurred his eyes. Then he bent over, watching the lad's face and seeing there the eyes he had looked into long ago and the brow he had kissed. With a strong effort he subdued a desire to waken the sleeper and question him, and then, with unsteady steps, he moved back to his seat by the fire, his face hard and his jaws clamped tight.

"An' it was Mary his father killed! It was Mary; an' she's dead; an' I'll never see her again. An' the man who killed her is alive somewheres. But if I meet him he'll die, die like the dog he is!" Rand stretched out his powerful arms with fists tight clenched and a look in his dark eyes that was the concentration of hate. Then slowly he turned and looked toward the boy. "But he mustn't—not him. I must see to it that her boy keeps his hands clean. Yes, I must see to that."

From up the narrow valley came the sound of a revolver shot, sharp and clear on the still night air. Then rang out a voice raucous and unsteady in wild ribaldry. Soon Rand could hear the sound of footsteps approaching down the track from the direction of North Bend, and then of other steps advancing from the opposite direction, those of the gang boss.

Dawson's voice rang out, sharp and imperative.

"Hello! That you, Speck? What you doin' wit' that gun? Put it up. You've too much booze in you to handle a gun."

The response was a laugh, wild and fierce, followed by a curse that consigned Dawson and the whole of his gang to perdition.

"Here, cut that!" commanded Dawson. "This isn't no Wild West show. If you're comin' here to work—"

His speech was interrupted by a flash and a shot.

Rand rose to his feet, prepared to climb to the tracks above. There was the sound of rushing feet, followed by oaths and the noise of a struggle. The next instant a revolver came flying down the embankment and landed at Rand's feet, exploding again as it struck the rocks.

The sound awoke Cariboo, who hastily threw aside his blanket and gazed around with a startled air.

A man came leaping down the rocks toward the fire—a man with a face blue with powder marks.

"Hand over that gun, curse you!" he yelled at Rand, who had secured the weapon and was holding it in his hand. But the big man put the gun behind him.

"Keep off, you drunken fool, or I'll down you!" he said.

From behind him Rand heard a cry, curious and trembling. Then came

an exultant shout. "It's him Big Dick! It's him! It's the man who killed my mother!"

The next instant Rand felt the revolver snatched from his hand, and Cariboo sprang by him. His eyes were unnaturally bright and on his face was written a terrible purpose. At the sight of the boy and the leveled weapon, the new dynamiter paused.

"Do you know me?" cried the boy. "I've growed some since you killed my mother."

The boy's words sobered up the blue-faced man on the instant and his face turned deathly pale.

With a quick movement, Rand knocked down the boy's levelled arm and then flung him to the ground among the rocks.

"Not you! Not you, boy! He's mine! Leave him to me!"

Like a flash, the murderer turned and ran, terror-stricken, and Rand bounded after him. Straight for the narrow spit of rock that teminated in Hell Gate, he went, and the men on the tacks above, who had poured out of the cars at the sound of the scuffle, chased to head him off.

The murderer reached the narrow promontory, Rand close behind him. Only once he glanced behind, then he leaped forward with increased speed, gaining impetus for a jump across the narrow chasm. But broken fragments of rock impeded his progress so that his best efforts were futile. He reached the end of the spit and sprang for the opposite bank. He missed it by several feet and fell into the caldron below.

Only for a minute did Rand stare down into the seething waters, then he turned and made his way back to the boy. He passed several men of the gang, who spoke to him, but he made no reply.

As he approached the place where he had flung the boy, he was stricken with terror to notice that he still lay there. He bounded quickly forward to the lad's side, kneeled, and raised him gently by the shoulders.

"Cariboo, boy! Cariboo! I didn't go for to hurt you!" he cried in a frenzy. The boy opened his eyes slowly, while blood from a nasty cut on his head showed the cause of his temporary unconsciousness.

"What did you stop me for, Big Dick? Why didn't—"

"I couldn't let you do a thing like that, boy. I couldn't do it. It would 've been murder, an' besides, he was as much mine as yours, for he murdered the woman we both loved," he said brokenly.

Cariboo roused himself and stuggled, with Rand's help, to his feet.

"You loved my mother! Was she the one you spoke of?" he asked, bewildered.

Rand swallowed hard, and nodded. "I saw her name in the little book you carry in your shirt, boy."

Cariboo passed his hand across his eyes. "That wasn't my mother's name, Big Dick: it was her sister's—my Aunt Mary."

"What?" cried Rand.

"It was Aunt Mary's book. She gave it to my mother 'cause she didn't have one."

"Then—then—" began the big fellow in a quiver of excitement. He paused and wiped the perspiration from his face.

"Do you know where your Aunt Mary lives? Tell me quick, boy."

"In Revelstoke. She's workin' in a hotel there."

"Married, is she?" Rand demanded, excitedly.

"No; she's not. She wanted me to live with her, but—"

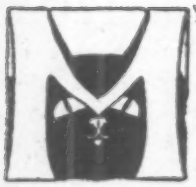
Big Dick Rand placed his arm about the boy's shoulders and led him toward the fire.

"There'll be no 'but' about it, Cariboo. You're goin' to live with her—with her an' me—'cause we're goin' to Revelstoke to-morrow an' she's goin' to marry me. Understand, boy?"

The boy nodded, smiling, and together the two went back to their shelter beneath the big rock.

A Woman's Face

BY MAUD B. HARRINGTON



Y name is Janet Fleming. When I was a little tot I was called "Janie;" now I am older—and presumably better looking, my friends have softened the hard little name to Jennie. I am a very average young woman to look at, neither handsome nor homely, although I do pride myself on rather a pretty figure and I try to dress as stylishly as my means will permit. I am not over burdened with education, of the classical order, that is, and like most girls, I am in for a good time when I can have it without displacing too many of the proprieties. In short, I am much like any other everyday girl, who works for her daily bread and occasional plum-pudding, who does the best she can for her employers and is ready for a frolic when work is done, with one exception: I have been followed up in a rather hair-raising way, which I think I may best describe by the word "haunted." For a long time I worried, feeling I must have done someone a wrong, however unintentional. They say a woman is like a cat and claws for the love of clawing. But I never knowingly clawed anyone in my life and I did not see how I could have clawed *Her* if my disposition had set that way, for I never knew *Her,* in the flesh, that is, and in spite of the supervision she exercised over me, I think I should have been her friend if we had ever met, for that she was a living, breathing reality, somewhere on this earth, I never doubted from the first.

I am not just sure where my story should date from, but I think it began on a certain bleak January day, in 1893; I was hurrying down Broadway, intent upon nothing but getting to the office in good season, as I had dallied a little longer than usual with my lunch. As I started to cross the street, my eye caught the glitter of gold at the edge of the curbing. Stooping, I found a peculiar locket; it was eight sided, and woven in and out of its lace-like edge was a fine flat braid of reddish-brown hair. A raised disk in the centre bore an inscription I could not decipher. This was evidently intended to open, but must have been controlled by a secret spring, for I was unable to get at the interior. It seemed of little value, but still, I inserted an advertisement in the newspapers, thinking the owner might prize it as a keepsake. No one appeared as a claimant, however, so after a little time, it was put one side and forgotten.

Some little time after this I had an offer from Ferry Brothers to enter their employ at higher wages and in a better capacity than I had been accustomed to. Of course I accepted and settled myself down to do my best work for my new employers.

It seemed to be my fate to be

thrown continually in the society of Mr. Allerton, one of the junior members of the firm, a tall, dark, silent man, with so stern an expression that I used to wonder if any woman ever was or ever could become attracted to him. This look of his repelled me, until I found his sternness and dignity were capable of being discarded, while a strangely contrasting boyishness took their place. He had, too, a singularly courtly, courteous bearing toward all women, which went a long way toward raising him in my estimation.

Our friendship flourished and he grew into the habit of calling twice a week or so for a little music or a chat; sometimes a friend was with him, but oftener he came alone.

It was some months after our friendship had progressed, that I began to view myself in the light of a haunted woman, although I did not immediately connect Mr. Allerton with the affair. I had been suffering from a severe headache, which was so intense as to keep me from the office. I telephoned that I should not be able to be at my desk that day and Mr. Allerton came out in the evening to see if I felt better. "All you need is a little fresh air and a change," he said, as he saw my pale face; "run and get ready and we will go to the theatre. A good brisk walk will clear your head like magic."

I ran to my room in a great flurry, for it was the first time he had made such a request and I had a natural desire to look my best. Tossing over my possessions for some ornament wherewith to enliven my costume, my eye fell on the odd old locket, and in an evil hour I fastened it about my throat with a bit of narrow ribbon.

As Mr. Allerton helped me on with my coat, his glance rested on my attempt at decoration. He started and an odd mixture of wonder, anger, and something wonderfully like sorrow came into his eyes. He made no comment however, beyond asking me where I got "that oddity." When I told him how it came into my possession, I fancied that his look changed to one of relief.

Well, we started. I was excited, but striving bravely to be entertaining and he was watching me in an amused sort of way, when suddenly I became conscious of a face floating apparently in the air just ahead of me.

It was the face of a young and rather pretty woman with every feature clear and distinct, yet through which I could plainly see the stars and the clear night sky. Her eyes were looking at me wistfully, I fancied, and with a queer little shiver floating down my spine, I *felt* a voice asking, "Won't you try to help me?"

I went so white that Mr. Allerton noticed it and insisted on my stopping to rest. But I threw off the uncanny feeling, protesting that it was only a momentary illness and we went on.

I still have the programme I held that night and folded between its leaves is a withered chrysanthemum, for I had my little romance, but let that be. That programme was all I had to remind me that there was a play on the boards that night. I saw only a mist of moving figures for Her face was constantly between me and the stage. As soon as my first fright was over, I could see that what-

ever beauty the face possessed was dependent on the expression—sweet, sad and sunny, all in one. Her luminous gray eyes reflected the many battles fought and won—tired, worn, disheartened, but still brave. I had a feeling that it would be impossible to make that woman angry; one would succeed only in wounding, but not in rousing to honest indignation. Her face was thin and the skin wore a peculiar though not unhealthy pallor. Her forehead was high and white and framed in soft brown hair. As I studied this face I felt, as I had felt the voice, that the locket at my throat belonged to her, and in an indistinct, troubled way I connected Mr. Allerton with the two. Call this imagination if you choose. I had never displayed any great activity in that line before so I may be pardoned for doubting its late appearance.

I talked, but I have no recollection of what I said. I walked home with Mr. Allerton beside me, but as one in a trance. I said, "Good-night" and went up to my room. All this time the face was floating before me. Once inside, I fancied the expression changed and a pitying look grew in the eyes. Then I *felt* that voice again. 'Poor child," it said. Then I took the locket off and the face slowly faded.

I thought the matter over for several days and then made up my mind to wear that locket for a little while and see what would happen. So I put it on and waited like our friend Micawber—and like him in vain, for nothing turned up.

I concluded that the whole thing was due to nervousness, until Mr. Allerton brought out a friend of his one evening that we might enjoy a little music. I sing a little. Mr. Allerton's friend played the violin beautifully, and the boarding-house piano wasn't so badly out of tune as usual.

I had been singing quite a little and was growing so pleased with the sound of my own voice, tempered by the violin, that I sang "Just one more" for pure pleasure. "Oh, 'tis I, Love," was the song, and I was singing it with much feeling when Mr. Allerton, who was turning my music, leaned over me and said softly, "Do you mean that, Jennie?" Swift as thought, following on his words, Her face flashed out once more just over the piano. I struck a false chord and stopped short, saying I was tired. I saw Mr. Allerton hiding a smile in the corner of his mustache; evidently he thought his whisper the cause of my confusion—and small wonder!

Again the face preceded to my room, but that night, I determined to find out, if possible, the connection between the face and the locket. I did not remove the locket, but went to bed with it still on my neck. I was not afraid—the face affected me in much the same way as the presence of a friend might have, and wishing I could return the trifle to the one I felt must be its rightful owner, I fell asleep. When I woke in the morning, the face was gone.

After this I wore the locket continually, and once in a while I saw my curious little "ghost" hovering over my desk. I saw quite a little of Mr. Allerton, but the face did not seem to follow in his footsteps. Still, I could not rid myself of the impres-

sion that he was in some way connected with it. By judicious questioning at the office, I learned that he had a turned-down leaf in his book of life, though just what it was no one seemed to know. He was not a married man though, my informant said; at least he thought not. He had heard a rumor that Mr. Allerton had been disinherited by his mother in favor of an adopted son, but couldn't guarantee the truth of the tale. In fact, nobody seemed to know very much about it. I went home after collecting all the facts I could, and digested them at my leisure. The result of this was the resolution to put a curb on certain fancies of mine that had been running riot, and instead of building unsubstantial air-castles in my room as usual, that night, I betook myself downstairs and played cribbage with my landlady.

The next day, the senior Mr. Ferry, from whom I had been accustomed to take my daily instructions, left New York hurriedly for Cuba, telling me I should receive my directions from Mr. Allerton during his absence. Now I had never been in Mr. Allerton's private office, his business with me always having been transacted at my desk, but finding his door ajar, I simply knocked and stepped inside saying, "Mr. Ferry sent me to you for my instructions this morning."

The Allerton of social life was, as I have said, inclined to boyishness; the Allerton of business was a grave, dignified man, whose composure it seemed impossible to disturb, but as I went in so unexpectedly he gave a little start; and with a slight movement of his elbow, overturned what appeared to be a portrait that stood on an easel at the right of his desk. I knew that the movement was intentional and that it was his wish that my eyes should not rest on that picture, as if he had told me in so many words. I surmised that he wished to avoid questions, and was smiling to myself when, behind his chair, appeared not the face alone, but Her entire figure. She stood with downcast eyes, looking at the overturned picture. Something about her expression—the tired, dejected drooping of the head—made my heart bleed. I took the various papers he handed me and left the room silently; this time the face did not follow.

I suppose I can't make my story complete without relating my own foolishness, though it does come a little hard. I, well, the fact is, I got rather more deeply interested in Mr. Allerton than I had intended. You see, he was good-looking, entertaining, thoughtful of one's comfort, honorable and, in short, possessed most of the attributes one admires in a man. But it was impossible for me to rid my mind of the idea that he was not destined for me, so, before my heart got past mending, I determined to take action. On Mr. Ferry's return, I persuaded him to transfer me to the Boston house. He was a little surprised at my request and though at first little inclined to grant it, ultimately gave his consent.

Mr. Allerton made any number of pretty speeches about my departure and made me promise to correspond with him. The morning I went away, he came down to the train with a huge bouquet. During our conversation—

if the nothings that fill the gap just before a parting can be called by so dignified a name—he suddenly asked: "What has become of that queer old locket I saw you wear once? You—you wouldn't like to give it to me, would you, just as a keepsake?"

"No, indeed!" I answered, "that is my amulet. I wear it all the time."

"It is a sorry amulet, I fear," he said slowly. "You have never opened it, I presume?"

"It won't open," I said. "I wish it would, for I feel certain the key to the mystery is on the inside."

"What mystery?" he demanded, I thought, uneasily.

"Oh, nothing!" I replied, "except the mystery of its ownership."

The matter rested for a few moments and we spoke of other things. Then he returned to the charge. "So you will persist in wearing that antiquated bit of jewelry? You had better give it to me and let me get you a new one; don't you think so?"

"I am very well satisfied with this," I replied, "and I don't see why you should feel under obligation to get me a new one."

"The truth is," he said, 'I have seen a locket much like that in a family I—well, was connected with. The sight of it roused painful yet pleasant memories. That it all."

"Oh! You may have it, of couse," I said. I was just on the point of taking it from my neck and telling him my experiences when the train gave a preparatory jerk. "No, no!" he said earnestly, putting out his hand and rising. "It cannot be the same of course—but— if you tire of wearing it ever, I might like to be remembered, you know. Good bye."

I liked Boston from the moment I set foot in it, and after several weeks' residence I felt quite like an old Bostonian in my pride of ownership. A thorough-paced New Yorker is proud of his city as the biggest, noisiest, busiest in the world, with a superlative collection of buildings. The Bostonian cares nothing for his city in the concrete, but every individual tree on the Common and every broken flagging in the streets he looks at fondly.

I heard from Mr. Allerton often; sometimes when reading his letters, I saw the face, but at no other time. I felt relieved, to feel my spectral friend's absence, and in making new and pleasant acquaintances I tried to forget the dart Dan Cupid had aimed at me. Thus it was that at Christmas time, although I thought of Mr. Allerton, prudence and a not over-full pocket-book forbade my sending him a present.

Evidently he had been troubled by no such scruples as myself, however, for the postman brought me a little square box, addressed in the well-known handwriting and a letter. The box contained an exquisite little gold chain. The letter expressed a hope that I would attach it to the old locket, and in feeling it about my throat think sometimes of the giver. It said also, that he hoped soon to see me in person and—a lot more like that.

I hung the old locket on the delicate thread of gold and clasped it round my neck. Perhaps—I said I was like other girls, you know—perhaps, then, my heart fluttered just a wee bit as I sat down to acknowledge the gift. I was a little lonely, and, try as I

might, I could not conceal from myself the fact that I cared more than I ought for the giver, and the gift itself, something he knew I would wear all the time, was fraught with a good deal of meaning to me. Thus I had my little foolish dream, and wrote him of my gratitude, saying I should always wear his gift and that I longed to see him.

That night I awoke with a start, about midnight, or possibly a little later. I was as broad awake as I am at this moment, so I know I was not dreaming. The moonlight came in through the parted curtains and cast a long beam across the floor. There in the full light stood a little cradle and bending over it, her cheek on the pillow, was a woman. One arm was thrown across the small bed. The right hand seemed to be clutching at her throat. The face was hidden, but I knew it was Her's and, impelled by some uncontrollable influence, I went forward. The face turned slowly toward me and I saw that the eyes were dim with pain, while on the hand lying on the cradle, I caught the glistening of a wedding-ring. I nearly fell—it was all so real—and suddenly it came into my mind that the chain about my neck was strangling her; though how that could be I did not know, but I saw her slender finger clutching at her throat and the golden circlet was burning into my flesh like a living coal.

With one vicious wrench I had it off and, as I did so, the locket flew open. A tiny miniature was inside and as I held it toward the light—Oh! what did it mean!—Mr. Allerton's eyes looked out at me. For a moment I stood in a sort of stupor. All I had known of the man, all his kindness had meant to me, all I had cared for him, came over me in one great surge of agony. I took a step toward the window and raising it, threw both chain and locket out into the night. With it flew the little hope I had cherished. The trinkets were gone by morning of course, though they might have laid there till the end of time before I would have picked them up.

As I turned back into the room, I noted, with some faint surprise, that the scene had changed. The cradle was gone and in its place seemed to be a flower-heaped mound. Her eyes were turned on me gravely and Her hand was pointing down. I stooped and started back. It was a grave—such a baby grave! Then, impelled by the same strange force, I stooped again and noted the little stone and its inscription: "Frederick, only child of John and Helen Ashton." As I read I *felt* Her voice: "A great wrong has been done Frederick Allerton. Tell him to lift the stone from the grave." Then the whole vision went out like the puff of a candle and I ran from the room half wild with fear. My own voice frightened me as I called to the girl across the hall to let me in quick. I had had a nightmare, I told her, sobbing as my overstrained nerves gave way.

Whether my visions meant anything but a disordered mind or not, I was at the place where I needed aid myself, so in the morning I sent an urgent telegram to Mr. Allerton. He came at once and sitting down I told him all in a trembling voice. He looked at me in a sort of troubled wonder and

when I had finished came over beside me and took my hand.

"Listen, Jennie," he said gravely. "I told you I thought I knew the locket. It once belonged to my dear mother and dying, she gave it to the girl I was to have married. The last time I saw it, it was on her neck. This John Ashton, whose name you have learned so correctly, was my mother's adopted son and the most thorough-paced villian who ever darkened God's sunshine. We fell in love with the same woman and she promised to marry me. I was so happy, Jennie! I had an offer to act as a buyer for a large leather firm here in Boston which, if I accepted, would mean a trip abroad. I could not bear to leave my darling, but it was such a tempting offer that I took it.

I wrote letter after letter and received no reply. I was nearly mad with anxiety, but stuck to my work for the sake of my love. At last it was finished and I came home. Home, to find the woman I loved, John Ashton's wife, my mother dead, and myself disinherited with bitter words in his favor. If hell holds worse hatred than mine for that man, I will forgive him. I found, too late, that my letters, both outgoing and incoming had been suppressed, my mother's mind and my promised wife's love poisoned by shrewdly woven lies. I cannot go into details even at this late day. She wore that locket the day I said good-bye and went away forever."

The intense sadness with which he spoke hurt me as though it were my own trouble. Had they—had they—a child?" I asked stammeringly.

"Yes," he said wearily, "a little boy. He died and is buried in Forest Hills, I believe."

"Will you go there with me?" I asked. "I cannot rest until I go."

He smiled. "I will go with you," he answered, "but I fear it will end in nothing. Still, we must quiet your mind."

We went. In a quiet corner, walled in by evergreens, we found the little grave. It was not hard work to push aside the tiny stone; in the cavity beneath was a thin box. Mr. Allerton seized it. Inside was a folded paper bearing a huge seal and a little note. We read the note together, the man's shoulder shaken by sobs.

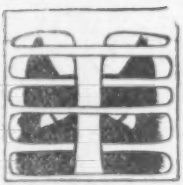
"I hide these papers here because, while John Ashton lives, I fear to make them public. In this box is Mrs. Edward Allerton's last will and testament. The will disinheriting Frederick, her son, was forged by my husband, John Ashton. In this box also, folded with the will, is a telegram purporting to come to me from Frederick Allerton announcing his marriage abroad. My child is dead and I leave the man who has ruined my life to the mercy of God. If he dies before I do, I shall return these papers to the man I have always loved. I put them here for safety till that time.

Helen Ashton."

We were both sobbing now, I in a woman's fitful way, but his heart was in his cries and his agony was terrible to witness. After awhile we grew quiet and, replacing the stone, went silently away. On the way back we talked feverishly of everything but the experience we had just passed through. But that night, as Mr. Allerton was taking leave of me, he put in my hand another locket and another chain. "Some day," said softly, "I will put Her face and mine in there for you—for I am going to find Her."

The Band

BY C. H. GREVET



THE crisis was past, and I had escaped unscathed. With a sigh of relief, I dropped heavily into a chair. For four days I had not left the office. I had eaten a monotonous series of sandwiches without taking my eyes off the ticker in the corner; and I had snatched intervals of necessary sleep with my ear cocked for the telephone. Now, however, I was free to rest. The business was safe and running smoothly once more. The terrific strain was over, and I thanked my lucky stars for the college built physique that had enabled me to stay at my desk through the fight.

A fat spider was trying to spin a web from my hat across to the window-ledge. Every time he reached his goal, the wind blew him to the floor, and he was forced back to the hat. I wondered idly whether he'd make it before I took the hat away. Then I sat up with a jerk.

"Here," I thought aloud, "this won't do at all. You've got to pull yourself together, old man, and get home before you go silly."

Rudely sundering the plucky spider's handiwork, I grabbed my hat and made for the street. The fresh air was delightfully grateful to me after that stuffy office, so I decided to walk home. Planning my course of action for the next week, I turned abstractedly one block too soon. Then I noticed that I was on the wrong street. My eyes wandered vaguely up to the signboard on the corner lamp-post, which informed me in six-inch letters that this was Hampton street.

"Good idea," I decided immediately. "I'll go in and see old 'Butch' Arden a while before I go home. He'll have a lot of medical lore to expound to me, and I can get my mind off the grain market. He will have to invite me to dinner, too," I thought maliciously, and thereupon retraced my steps half a block to the window-plate that read:

HAROLD J. ARDEN, M. D.
Brain and Nerve Specialist

I found the doctor buried to his ears in a mass of such offensively technical stuff as "Deductive Psychology in Practical Application." However, he seemed genuinely glad to see me, in spite of my ill humor.

"Yes," he announced calmly, "applied psychology works like this from deduction. I infer that you figured you'd be asked to stay for dinner. Deducting this fact from your manner of speech, I gently refrain from inviting you. But," with a merry twinkle in his non-professional eye, "that's where psychology fails. *You* stay, anyhow!"

"How cleverly you do act," I said gravely. "You actually take the sting

from the favor of your method of invitation. And you also administer a veiled rebuke to my presumption in coming at this hour. Your psychology is faultless. I came for dinner."

Needless to say, there was nothing like formality between us. We had roomed together at college, and had always been great chums. And, between men, friendship takes the form of barbaric frankness. Each of us tried to outdo the other in harsh primitive endearments.

After dinner, the doctor regaled me with a grist of medical stories that fairly stood my hair on end. I forgot all about my exhausted condition listening to his tales about the phenomena of psychology. At one story, however, I balked. My plain business mind would not comprehend the possibilities of his statement.

"Why," I burst out, "you don't expect me to believe that, do you? That's outside the bounds of reason, Butch!"

"Perhaps," he admitted, "perhaps to your mind it is. Many psychological facts *are* outside the bounds of reason. Yet it is the truth, absolutely."

Still I was unconvinced.

"I can understand, Doc, how a nervous invalid might be influenced by suggestion to that extent; but a well man in the prime of life—why, it's absurd! Do you mean that no one is impervious to mental suggestion?"

"So far as we can ascertain," answered the doctor positively, "it makes no ultimate difference how vigorous of mind or how virile physically one may be; no one is immune to the effects of suggestion. The extent would depend on the circumstances and state of mind of the individual involved, but given favorable conditions and attendant circumstances, no human being is entirely impervious to the power of suggestion!"

Naturally, such a discussion did not tend to quiet my tired nerves. I had discarded my business worries, only to substitute a jumble of clamoring psychological theories. My brain was still keyed up to a dangerously high pitch. By the time I reached home, my whole body cried out for rest; yet my mind was still engrossed in a disjointed tangle of thoughts. All my attempts to forget serious matters proved abortive.

In desperation, I picked up a volume of Poe and stretched out comfortably on the lounge to calm myself. But to-night my favorite author proved anything but satisfactory. His plots were so elusively left unexplained that I was continually reminded of my talk with Dr. Arden. By that time, I began to feel positively creepy. My nerves were jumping at every unusual noise. At last, with a mouth-filling oath, I hurled the offending book into a corner and got nervously to my feet. I was twitching from head to foot. For the first time in my life I took a long shot of raw whiskey before turning in. I was almost afraid to go to bed at all, alone as I was in the house. With nervous haste, I began peeling off my clothes.

Strange as it seems, I slept almost immediately. I did not even dream. I cannot say how long I slept. I do not even know why I awoke. It was still inky dark all about me, and

for a moment I lay perfectly still, listening intently. I heard nothing. I started to roll over—and with one bound I was on my feet. Trembling from head to foot, I switched on a flood of light and gazed wildly about me. Everything was just as I had left it. Screaming with fright I wrenched at my pajamas, and fairly tore them from my body. I stood naked in the glare of the electrics, shivering and mouthing curses. God! It makes my flesh crawl now as I think of it! I could feel *something* tightening on my leg and moving upward! I saw—nothing! Frenzied, I clutched at the slimy Thing, and dug my nails into a yielding mass that was *not* my leg. There was a slight ripping sound, and an overpowering stench assailed my nostrils. My head became dizzy, the room reeled sickeningly about me, and I fell crashing to the floor.

The shock brought me to my senses a little—and that accursed Something tightened on my leg an inch higher up! Like a drunken man, I staggered across the floor toward the telephone. At every step, that invisible horror brushed against the other leg like a damp snake. And it was hot, instead of cold!

My only clear thought was to reach that telephone on the table. I was afraid to touch my leg again, because of what had happened before. If I fainted, I would never get help. I *must* reach that table!

The pain, and the *knowledge* of that band on my leg were torture. The lights seemed to sway and darken before my eyes. The table I was trying to reach swirled and circled away from me in a gray mist. The floor undulated like the tin waves at Coney Island. And the band gripped my leg muscles so I could hardly stand. With a last, mighty effort, I knocked the telephone receiver from the hook, and then I collapsed onto the shreds of my pajamas.

When I came to my senses again, I was in my own bed, with the family physician and a nurse standing over me. Neither appeared to be greatly concerned about me, which made me feel strangely ill at ease. Then the doctor addressed me in calm and unruffled tones:

"You must have had a nightmare, Jeff; we found you in a prety bad shape here. Doesn't seem to be anything the matter now, though. How do you feel?"

How did I feel. I shuddered as he spoke for fear that Thing would move and tighten again. My whole body was numb with the stricture about my hips where the band had finally settled. Nothing the matter! The doctor was a fool: that was the only explanation. And there he stood, smiling vapidly, like the idiot he was!

"Damn it!" I exclaimed, "call Doctor Arden; he's got a head on his shoulders. As for you and the nurse," I added brutally, "get out! I'll call you in when I have the mumps!"

I lay like a board until Dr. Arden came, sick with the fear of what might happen if I moved. To him, I explained the whole night's happenings since we had parted. He listened attentively, and made notes of all I said. If he had doubted my story, I believe I should have gone crazy on

the spot. My wonder to this day is how I stood the mental strain of it, as it was.

"No," he said soothingly, "I don't think you are crazy. But it's strange how your doctor got you to bed without noticing that band on your waist. I suppose anyone can feel it as well as you can. He must have been very careless!"

He came over to the bed and gently examined me.

"I can feel the Thing all right," he stated quietly. "It's about four inches wide, and is raised a full inch from your body. The sensation is just as you say. It is like a very soft, *hot* eel! Why, your whole body is swelled and chilled from the stricture! It acts just like a tourniquet. If it were not low down on the hips, it would stop the circulation in your legs entirely. There's no mistake about its being there, that's sure!"

I raised up excitedly, on the point of speech; and then fell back again with a stifled groan, as it tightened suddenly on my waist. The doctor seemed to notice that awful odor, and fanned it away with newspaper.

"It smells a lot like chlorine!" he exclaimed. "No wonder you felt dizzy last night after struggling with the Thing, whatever it is. We'll do something about this at once, before you collapse again. Try to keep as calm as you can, and we'll soon bring you around all right."

I was so weak by that time I could barely talk above a whisper. At every move, the Thing made the pain worse My legs were swollen to an enormous size. I was a dark purple all over from the stricture caused by that slimy tourniquet. The pain drove me frantic; but I could not move a muscle without increasing the agony. Every minute my vitality was diminishing, while my overtaxed heart was laboring like a ship in a typhoon. Yet I was expected to keep calm—calm in the grip of that living Death! I was a powerful man in full health, but I was helpless as a babe against an invisible, steel-muscled jelly! The situation was appalling in its mystery and horror.

"Doctor," I gasped, "what can you do? You can't *see* the Thing to get it off me. It's horrible! And if you touch it, I'll be choked by that foul gas. Have I got to die like this, without even a fight for it?"

"I'm here to do the fighting for you," he answered in an even tone. "Don't get excited and waste your strength. We will not let you die. Just relax, and I'll do all the rest."

His masterful confidence in himself served to reassure me, and I lay back a little less wildly. When he spoke again his voice had more of real sympathy and understanding in it than I ever supposed a surgeon was capable of feeling toward a patient.

"Now," he said, "I'm going to operate on you right here. You'll be perfectly all right. We can't use ether on account of your heart. Cocaine will be better, anyhow. Then you can know just what we're doing all the time. Don't give way to any foolish fear in this matter. Do you think you can stand it all right now?"

"Nothing you do to me can be any worse than this!" I croaked fervently. "Get to work. If you have to take both legs to get that devilish

Thing off me, take them. Do anything you like—only for God's sake, do something quick!"

Hastily, they improvised an operating table, and laid me out as comfortably as possible. Dr. Arden rigged up some queer "breathers" to protect us from that vile stench while he worked. Then they gave me a tremendous swig of strong ammonia, and shot my thighs full of cocaine. Slowly the pain lessened.

Presently, Dr. Arden's soothing voice came to me out of the mist. Curiously calm and detached it seemed to me then.

"Jeff, Boy," it asked, "why do you keep that slimy belt on? Do you like it on there?"

I answered thickly and without conscious volition:

"I'm tired, Doctor. My nerves are all frayed out. Yes,—yes, I like that wet belt—my nerves are—"

"Jeff, listen to me now." His voice came steadily from a great distance. I could hear the rain sighing in the tree tops. "Jeff, that belt looks uncomfortable. I see it plainly now—and it's not pretty. And Pearl—Pearl won't marry you if you keep that on there. Pearl doesn't like that belt. Why do you keep that belt on? Jeff, you'd better take off the belt now—take off—the belt—belt—belt—"

Again I answered without any personal wish. My own voice did not sound familiar to me, but was a shaky falsetto.

"Take off—the belt—belt," I repeated slowly. "Pearl won't like you in that belt, boy. Take off—belt."

"The belt, Jeff," continued the doctor. "How does it come off? The belt—How—How—How—take off—the belt? How—take off—belt—*How?*"

That voice beat into my very soul; pleading, urging, calling on me. Always it repeated, always pleading, questioning.

Suddenly I sat bolt upright, sobbing over and over the name of my sweetheart, and mumbling that phrase about the belt.

"Jeff, boy," urged the doctor sadly. "How—How—take off—the belt—belt?"

With a rush, it came to me that I was to tell him what I knew—the belt—how—to take it off!

"Doctor," I ejaculated in a hoarse whisper, "put some cocaine in the belt—the *belt*!"

Then something snapped in my head, there was a grinding crash, and everything went black.

When I returned to consciousness once more, I felt strangely light and unhampered. Dr. Arden was reading by the bed. He looked up quickly at my exclamation of astonishment, and came over to me with a twisted little smile.

"Is it gone?" I asked, knowing as I spoke that it was gone. "But how did you do it? What was it?"

His smile broadened into a grin of delight.

"You ought to know the answer better than I, Jeff. You took it off yourself!"

The Meanest Man

BY J. BERNARD LYNCH

THE meanest man lives in every town, and Ashwynham, hidden in the heart of Massachusetts' hills, is no exception.

Furthermore, he furnishes a "mystery," transmitted to the uninitiated by the natives who gather nightly on the steps of the village store. Through building up and exploding mysteries this conclave lives.

This particular meanest man, was Justin Winn, and the town humorists fully believed that every modern definition of meanness was made in Ashwynham, and directly inspired by Justin.

What Justin believed is not known, but he offered no alibi, and said in town meeting that he cared no more for the opinion of the doorstep gang than did the village postmaster for the factory whistle.

This public exposition of his feellings first offended the neutrals, and for a time he was given the same scant consideration accorded the low-brow South Villagers. Not until the town reporters spread the news of Mrs. Winn's illness, did the conclave re-recognize the fact that Justin was living amongst them. And, with rare discernment, Justin did not flatter himself that the interest was personal. He knew a minimum was accreditable to Mrs. Winn's likable disposition, the rest was sympathy for the meanest man's wife. Only after a vigorous venting of public wrath did Justin call a doctor and open his house for visitors.

From the first of the illness, which concerned him only from a financial viewpoint, Justin followed his usual custom of hitching his lean horse to a decrepit wagon for a daily drive to Fitchburg for supplies.

"Must have grub," he observed, when his long absences were criticized, "and I ain't going to feather the nest of the village storekeeper."

The outraged feelings of several visitors threatened hostile expression one evening, when they found the patient alone and unattended.

Justin, ignoring their reproaches, put up the horse, then entered the house, meditated a few minutes beside his wife, then adjourned to the kitchen where he brewed himself a cup of tea. After devouring a generous lunch, he brought forth his corncob and, smoking vigorously, awaited the departure of his unwelcome callers.

As the last one left, Justin appeared relieved. He gave a sigh that meant just that, fastened the doors, and hurried to the barn by way of the wood house beyond the kitchen ell.

His wagon held supplies that must be put away before he slept.

The storeroom between shed and barn was elevated a few steps above the barn floor. Some of the pur-

chases were heavy—necessitating the use of rope and tackle. With the task completed he carried out the lantern before clapping on the padlock, when he was startled by a light footfall.

He turned with apprehension, but the apparition was not what he feared, though the white figure appeared gruesome enough in the flickering light.

He gasped as he said, "You here, Sarey?" When he took her arm he found it palpable enough, so he went on, bravely, "Get right back to bed. You'll catch your death of cold."

Unheeding, she reached for the lantern, but Justin hung it on his arm and snapped the padlock.

"Lemme in," she pleaded, "lemme in, Justin, just this once. Never in all the years would you trust me with the key. If I'm going to die 'twon't do you no harm to lemme in. It will be a deal easier if I know arter all that you trust me that much."

The note of hysteria in her voice grew with her speech, until at the close, it sounded in his ears like the chimney-wind wailing on a dismal night.

"Quit your gab!" he cried. "I said you shouldn't go in there and you sha'n't."

He dragged her back to the house almost forcibly. Exhausted by emotion and the unwonted exertion, the woman fell into a profound sleep.

At this very instant, the illness of Mrs. Winn was the subject of discussion by the ladies of the Clio Club, and many were the expressions of sympathy and resentment. Next day the club sent a delegation with flowers and sick-room edibles to the Winn homestead, and there they heard the plaints of the patient, agreed she was dying of curiosity, and conveyed their deductions in excited tones to Justin.

"Tomorrow," he told them. "That's time enough. I'll leave the storeroom key under my wife's pillow."

With this the ladies had to be content and hurried away. Satisfying himself that he was quite alone, Justin locked the bedroom door, took his hat and coat, and crept out to the barn, backed the horse into the thills, completed the hitching in record time, and proceeded to readjust the rope and tackle. Ere long the largest of his previous day's purchases were lowered to the wagon and covered with a blanket. Spade and pickax were shoved under the seat before the astonished horse was told, in subdued tones, to "giddap."

The invigorating night air of Ashwynham fanned Justin's cheek, and with it came grim apprehensions. What if some curiously-inspired native should discover the nature of his freight? A drive at such an unseemly hour would excite suspicion. Everything and everybody in the keeping of the Ashwynham critics were supposedly unconscious, but there might be some wight abroad who had failed to keep the town's unwritten law.

As the distance increased between himself and that locked bedroom, Justin regained his customary optimism. One good reason for cheer was furnished by the fact that it was a moonlight night. That is, the town illuminating committee, aided and abetted

by the Old Farmer's Almanac, so considered it, and operating on that schedule, turned on no electricity. As a matter of fact, the moon was obscured by clouds, so the town was "dim as your pocket," with a "darkness that might be felt," one of those famous nights when all cats are black ones.

Nothing occurred to decrease Justin's faith in his own luck until he passed the tiny, lamp-lit railroad terminus, and made ready to guide his slow moving steed into the Main street. Strange sounds rudely broke the general peace. Justin, alert and rigid in his seat, lent an attentive ear. Suddenly his frown changed to a wide grin. He recognized the methodical rhythm of the hotel phonograph unwinding the strains of "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary," and the other disturbance, farther off, as a noisy friction drive runabout making a late return from Gardner.

Shrugging his shoulders, he again advised his horse to "Get along there."

Up Main street the outfit proceeded, with the slow, uncertain motion of an overloaded caravan crossing an unfamiliar desert. When he passed the School Boy Statue on the hill he experienced a renewal of security, and settled back, letting the now wearied horse pick his own way up the rest of the grade.

Behind that famous work of art lurked two men. No one knows what they were doing, out of bed and away from their homes, at that hour—in Ashwynham. Several good guesses might be ventured. At any rate, with a simultaneous desire to pass the obloquy on to the other fellow, they moved to the middle of the road, and glared in the gloom after the vehicle.

"Holy smoke!" said one.

"Murder!" returned the other.

"You know who that was?"

"Sure. Only one horse in town that way—three dots and a carry. And only one wagon has two flat wheels."

"Then we both say it was—"

"Justin Winn!"

As by appointment they began to walk rapidly after the team. Human nervousness being more than a match for overdriven brute strength, they soon arrived at the tail of the wagon, and then came alongside. At that instant the moon remembered its engagement, and broke forth from behind the ingathering clouds. One of the men placed his hand on the blanket and gave it a twitch. The other man helped. Unseen by Justin, whose eyes were on the horse's ears, they uncovered the object of the journey, and stood an instant transfixed. Then each turned and raced rapidly down the hill. At the foot one paused. "'Phone station," the other gasped. Both raced on.

In the station they summoned a sleepy operator, secured an equally sleepy constable, woke him effectually with their story, and ten minutes later the three breasted the fatal hill. The constable, indeed, was objecting. He wanted to requisition some sort of vehicle, but the citizens assured him Justin's pace was of such a sort that he could be caught, "redhanded," only a few feet from where they had abandoned him.

In this, indeed, they were wrong.

Justin's horse was slow, but, like the snail, kept everlastingly at it, and had covered quite a distance from Breezy Hill by the time the trio had arrived there. The moon had gone into retirement again, but the constable wasted two flashes out of his thousand sum total, and discovered wheel tracks at the cross roads, Meeting-house Hill way.

The long journey, still up hill, did not lessen the valor of the trio, though it did damage their wind. They scented mystery, and those bumps of curiosity which as good Ashwynhamites they all possessed, ached with a desire for satisfaction. At the top of the hill they stopped by the old Well House to rest. The constable further refreshed himself with copious draughts of water.

"Hist!" cried the constable, and every fellow listened and at first could hear only the pumping of his own heart. Then a sonorous snore was borne to the listening ears. They stared. Facing them was the resting place of the town's illustrious dead. The moon again shone forth, but thinly veiled. Moving cautiously forward they discerned, at the cemetery gate, the object of their quest. The vehicle was stationary, and the horse was nibbling grass from the embankment. As for the snoring—that was Justin.

The constable went forward with a firm official step and inspected the wagon. The object of interest was again covered, this time with the lap robe, of which Justin had defrauded himself. The constable tiptoed about, and won assurance that his companions had not brought him out on a fool's errand. Joining them, "You were right," he whispered. "He is surely a villian to sit there snoring, while the evidence of his crime is just behind him."

"What you going to do about it?" whispered one of the others, who seemed to discern in the constable a tendency to improve the occasion by moral reflections rather than by acts of bravery.

"Hist! Back in the bushes! You'll see!"

Drawing his revolver, he fired into the air. As if in response to the signal, that convenient moon came forth in full glory, and Justin woke up. Rubbing his eyes, he looked around, as if to get his bearings. Deliberating, he gazed at the silvery splendor of upper and lower Naukeag Lakes, where Mt. Monadnock stands forth in rugged outline, and then the trio actually heard him say, "No, not the place. Not half lonesome enough." Whereat he jerked on the reins, and clattered away down the hill.

It seems incredible, but at this point the tale, as told by the grocery doorstep crowd, invariably puts the trio in the back of the wagon, where they remain the rest of the way, unknown to Justin. It was down hill, else certainly their presence would have been discovered and objected to by the horse.

One mile, then another, was completed, and Justin paused where a sign post, in the just then generous moonlight, announced the road to Wellville. Here he turned into a lane over which the trees formed a canopy. The place seemed to meet with Justin's approval. At the end of a

hundred yards he whispered, "Whoa," and the pleased steed stood still. While Justin climbed down the trio scampered off.

The meanest man found the spade and pick, and began to dig. He kept at it a good while, aided by the moon. The hole grew until it resembled a rude grave. And such it might be, for when he uncovered the wagon it disclosed a full-sized, pretty good coffin, with great metal handles that reflected in their polished surfaces the beams of light sifting through the trees.

Just as Justin seemed deciding how to slide the coffin into the grave prepared for it, the constable, followed by his companions, rushed forward and fell on the prey.

"Consider yourself my prisoner," he roared at Justin, who crumpled with astonishment, and pitched headlong into the hole. A moment of tense silence followed, then Justin observed, "Under arrest, be I? What for?"

"Can't say just now," returned the constable, "but you got to come with me. Peaceable, if you will, if not—" he looked at his trusty revolver and shook his head ominously.

"Oh, I'll come fast enough," said Justin. "Want to use my rig?"

"Of course we do," returned the constable, rather testily. "Doesn't it contain the evidence?"

He felt that he was not exactly covering himself with glory, and so he hastened to pile in his prisoner and his witnesses, and to urge the steed back over the stony road. The constable and one citizen, with Justin wedged between, occupied the wagon seat. The other citizen shuddered on the "evidence." The drive was a silent one, but once the prisoner spoke.

"I guess I'm not so slick," he observed.

"Base man," said the sympathetic citizen beside him. "I pity you, I do indeed, I am sure you will regret this night's work."

"Bet yer life I do that," responded Justin heartily.

"You would it had never been accomplished?"

"Guess so; that was darn hard digging, that was."

Both witnesses shuddered at the hardened wretch.

In the diminutive town lockup Justin was finally landed, and the constable then volunteered, "We are going to open the coffin."

Justin glared.

"Want someone to represent you?" asked one of the witnesses. "I know a good lawyer in Fitchburg."

"Lawyer nothing," replied Justin. "Send for the undertaker."

"Who?"

"You heard me the first time," snapped Justin. "I've had just about enough of this tomfoolery. Send for the undertaker. He's probably sitting in a game of freezeout in his own back room. And if I got to stay here all night some of you ginks go and get a report how my wife is. The kitchen door's on the jar. Here's the bedroom key."

The undertaker responded to the "night bell" and when he entered the calaboose Justin shook him cordially by the hand. At the same moment a breathless messenger brought the news that Mrs. Winn had been awakened, said she felt better than for

many weeks, and had not missed her husband at all.

"What's the mystery?" asked the undertaker.

"No mystery at all," said Justin. "I was trying to economize, but from the reports from home guess 'twon't be necessary. Want to buy a good coffin for two dollars?"

"Cease this ribaldry," exclaimed the still grandiloquent constable. "If your wife's body is not in the coffin, then what body is?"

"Nobody," grinned Justin. "You got a overheated imagination. I was in Fitchburg t'other day and had a chance to buy this coffin for a dollar fifty. They all said my wife was sick so she'd never get well, and it struck me 't would be a good thing to have the coffin in the house, in case of necessity. But somehow it didn't seem quite such a slick proposition when she took the fancy to see into the storeroom. I couldn't jest stand it to let her know that I was that forehanded. I suppose you fellows won't believe it of me, but I did suffer while she was a-pleading of me to let her in. I'd never quite sensed afore how women folks took such things. I jest had to appear real ha'sh to keep her outen the place. So I thought I'd hide the coffin off somewheres where it wouldn't scare none. It's my property, bought and paid for. See, I took a bill of sale. Say, constable, you know the law. Ain't a man got a right to bury his own coffin?"

The group gasped, then the constable silently unlocked the iron gate and turned Justin loose.

Only one of the citizens ventured a farewell.

"S'pose you're bound for home?" he inquired.

"Yah," snapped Justin, in quite the old manner. Then somewhat sheepishly, he drew from his pocket a key and regarded it ruefully—the last evidence of the authority he had exercised by right of being the meanest man.

"Going to give it to Sarey," he volunteered, adding, "and I ain't going to take it away again, neither."

The Lilac Car

BY FRANCES MITCHEL.

MISS 'LIZBETH had a story, but what is was, was a vexed question among the gossips, some of whom declared that she was once to have been married, and the guests were all in the house; she was dressed, and the preacher waiting to perform the ceremony, when a note was brought her, from her affianced, saying he had left, never to return, and asking her to forget him. Others told of a drunken husband, who had deserted her, and then had tracked her to her present home, whither she had fled, bearing her maiden name, to live down her sorrow, and now came back, occasionally, after dark, and gave a peculiar rap on the window, which she understood as a demand for money. They further told, how, to prevent his proclaiming himself as her husband, she always gave him the sum he required, although she lived on but meagre fare for weeks afterward. But the few who knew Miss 'Lizbeth best, declared that she was a gentle little woman of refined tastes, who kept her secret because it was sacred to her, and not because of any disgrace attached to it. Indeed, one of these friends had once gone so far as to intimate that she wished Miss 'Lizbeth would give her some little statement that she might make, and so close the mouths of the gossips, but the little woman had only smiled and said:

"Why, they have partaken of me and my sorrows, with their tea, for so long, that they would be unable to drink it, minus the flavor; no, just let them continue to speculate, and in speculating, be happy."

And so five years had gone by, and still Miss 'Lizbeth's secret was discussed by the gossips, and still the only point they could fully agree upon was that there was certainly a man in the case, when, one day, the news came that at eight, the next evening, the lilac train would pass through, en route for Montana.

Everyone in the little town knew what the coming of the lilac train meant, for it was no new thing—this sending of a carload of blossoms, sometimes into the mining towns of the north, where the breath from the smelters destroyed every vestige of vegetation; sometimes to the towns that nestled high up the mountain sides, and shivered with their summer frosts and the biting winds from the snow fields around them. Only the last year, Leadville had been brightened by the coming of the "Lilac Train," for so it was called, although there were always other kinds of flowers and usually but one carload; but, though the shelves at one end of the car held potted plants and cut flowers of every variety, it was the lilacs that were loaded, by trucks full, as the train stopped

at one station and then at another.

"That's a pretty custom you have here in Utah," Miss 'Lizbeth had said to the neighbor who, in passing, had noticed her standing by a lilac bush, caressing a blossom she had plucked, and had told her about the coming of the lilac train. "They say that up in Butte and Anaconda and those other Montana mining towns, there is not a tree, shrub, or plant growing out of doors. I heard of one small azalea that sold easily for fifteen dollars in Butte. What a sight it must be to those people to see a whole carload of blossoms coming into their midst!"

"They say they are as delighted as if a carload of gold nuggets were being distributed. Will you unload your bush, there, for their benefit?"

"Indeed, I shall be only too glad to send some nice bouquets. I love lilacs," and as she stooped to pick up the flower she had dropped, her friend passed on, remarking:

"Well, I must be off," and did not see the tear in Miss 'Lizbeth's eye, nor notice the tremor in her voice.

That night, Miss 'Lizbeth sat alone on her little front porch and watched the moon come slowly up from behind the great mass of the Wahsatch range, and sail off into the blue vault above, and as she watched she thought:

"Yes, I'll do it. It can't do any harm. If it falls into Reuben's hands, he'll understand what it means. If it don't, why, the blossoms will cheer some one's heart, and the—*other*, will just excite a little curiosity. Five years ago, day after tomorrow, I got off the train here, and Reuben went on up north. The lilac train went just ahead of his, and I picked up one of the blossoms that had fallen when they were loading, and handed it to him. I don't know why I did it; Reuben had never asked for a promise of any kind from me, but I had read something in his eyes, all that year when I was boarding at his mother's. And his treatment of me, too, was another thing. He would come to meet me and walk home with me, and would ask, so gently, if the day had been a hard one. He was such a great, good-hearted fellow! No, I don't know why I did it, but when I handed him the blossom, I said, 'I'll wait for you, Reuben, for years, if it is necessary," and then I turned and fled to the waiting room, and his train was just starting, so he could not answer, but I know his heart."

There Miss 'Lizbeth heaved a sad little sigh, and sat tapping her lips with the lilac blossom she had taken from her belt.

"I wonder why he never wrote to me," she mused on presently. "I expect he failed in his mining and was discouraged. I know Reuben loved me," and the little woman blushed as if she had been talking to Reuben himself. "Yes, he did. I know he did, and I'll—*do it!*" and then she arose and went into the house.

The next day, Miss 'Lizbeth went down town, looking her best in a pretty dark blue suit, with a neat walking hat to match, and returned in an hour, with a tiny envelope in her hand. Later in the evening, she started out with two large bunches of lilacs, and if the gossips had met her,

they would have noticed a certain guilty look she wore, and would have declared that the drunken husband had been around lately.

An impatient crowd of people had been standing in the rain, since the early morning, expecting momently to hear the whistle of the engine that would bring the lilac car into the Butte depot. The noon whistles had sounded; still no evidence of the coming of the lilac car; still a pouring rain and still a waiting mass of people. Twelve-fifteen — thirty — forty-five—a whistle and the crowd began to surge forward. Into the depot the engine panted, and with a shout the anxious, weary waiters welcomed the men who stood on the platforms, with arms full of blossoms.

"Throw them this way, pardner." "Give us a few, over here." "Don't forget us. We can't get any closer." Such were the cries that came up from various quarters, as men, women and children, reached and scrambled for the flowers that came pouring upon them.

Coming with quick step, down one of the streets, was a man roughly dressed in a miner's garb, and close behind him, another, clad in a neat brown business suit.

"Now, I do wonder if I am too late for the lilac train," soliloquized the man in the lead. "'Twill be the first one I have missed since I came into Montana. Five years ago, *she* gave me a blossom that had fallen when they were loading the lilac train, and then she said, 'I'll wait for you, Reuben!' She read in my face what I did not have the manhood to tell her. She must have been sorry for me then, and so spoke, before she thought, but afterward, she grew sorry for herself, I suppose, when she realized what she had done, for she didn't answer that letter I wrote, as soon as I got here, telling her how gladly I could work now, knowing that she was waiting for me. Well, she'd had to wait a long time, for luck was against me, right along, but I didn't care, since *she* wasn't waiting for me, after all. She was in earnest when she said she'd wait. I am sure of that. And now, if only I could send her a message, saying, *'I am coming.—Reuben,'* it would be worth all these years of work and discouragement. I've seen people from there, many times since, but they didn't know that I knew her, and I never asked about her—I was afraid, somehow, of what they might tell me, till about a month ago, when the Sweet Lilac began to show rich streaks. Then—" and here he clenched his hands till the nails cut into the calloused flesh, "then I asked Jim Davis, if he knew her; he said he didn't, but he had heard her name in connection with some rumor about a drunken husband, and I turned and left him, and spent a night that was—well, a man don't have to die, to taste of the tortures of hell. Ah, I am not too late," for he had come in sight of the car, and in another moment, he and the man in brown, who had kept even pace with him, for a block or more, were grasping frantically at a large bouquet that came over the heads of the crowd, within easy reach for them.

"There, stranger," exclaimed the

miner, "I beat you on that catch, but there are enough here for two, so I'll cut the string and 'divy' up, as we say in camp."

"You are generous, sir," answered his late rival, "and I will gladly pay you any sum you may name, for my share of them. My little sick daughter—"

"Little sick daughter? Well, now, do you think I'd *sell* you a few flowers for her? And besides, money is nothing to me. Have you heard of the Sweet Lilac, that sold yesterday for fifty thousand— What's this?" and lifting a tiny tintype that had been fastened in among the stems, he gazed into the face that spoke back to him, with a look of love, he only, could read. "I'm waiting for you, Reuben," were the words he saw faintly scratched beneath the face, and turning to his wondering companion, he said, as he held the entire bouquet to him:

"Just give me one small spray of the flowers, stranger, and you can have all the rest for the little girl. I'm going in here to send a telegram that says, *'I am coming.—Reuben.'*"

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The Call the Parson Heard

BY MARION HILL.

HERE were seven and a fraction passengers in the stage, to wit: two white men, a Spanish priest, three Mexican laborers, one Mexican woman—and the woman's baby. The baby, the fraction, was valuable out of proportion. It attracted the ever increasing swarm of flies and wailed unceasingly. At intervals the priest consulted a book of devotions, all the while repeating prayers aloud—so loud indeed, as to arouse doubt of their sincerity. Despite his closed eyes and wrapped expression, one could not kill the suspicion that he was playing to the galleries. For thirty hours, since the stage left Guadaloupe, the other passengers had been successfully restraining a desire to cast him headfirst into the road. Duplicity, however well meant, only adds to honest discomfort; and the heat was scorching, the dust was choking, the flies, until they discovered the baby, exasperating.

Of the two white men, one was a vigilante from the West, the other a minister from the East. One was seeking health for the body politic, the other, health for the body corporal. The former was Colonel Dan Gilmore of Camp Mary. The later was the Rev. Ernest Churchill of Massachusetts. Each was true metal; one, case hardened, the other finely, almost too finely, tempered.

Ministers of the Gospel were rare birds in the neighborhood of Camp Mary, and it was Gilmore's pressing need at just that time to snare just such a bird. He needed one in his business.

The Colonel had already entered into conversation with the minister, but the baby's cries kept interfering with the delicate manœuvring he had in mind. At the first available stopping place, driven to desperation, the Colonel jumped out and bought two dozen oranges. It was his manner of presenting the fruit that went against him.

"Here, woman!" he blurted, "stuff that young monkey with these."

In those days and at that place the fruit was worth many dollars. But the woman angrily shoved it away, spicing her rejection with a few pretty compliments in her own tongue. These were lost on Gilmore, but as the stage strained and bulged and jolted on in its torturing crawl he gave vent to his feelings in an expressive manner. Taking off his hat to do homage to his expressions, he threw away the oranges one at a time, bestowing upon each a separate curse, the twenty-fourth including an itemized damnation of every number of the body of a man who had been fool enough to squander good gold upon a greaser brat. When the last oath had rolled away, consternation was on every Mexican face, and si-

lence reigned until the minister spoke.

"Excuse me, sir," he said quietly, "but don't you think that was unnecessary?"

"Well, by——! I should say so," replied the Colonel, wiping the perspiration from his smarting, knat-bitten face. "It's a plumb waste of fruit and money, sir."

"I didn't refer to the deed, but to the language," said Churchill, looking the other squarely in the eye. Churchill was slender and far from strong; but there was nothing weak about his light blue eyes. Gilmore leaned back and returned the look for a moment; then abruptly, but not roughly, brought down his big hand upon the minister's knee and leaned forward again.

"Parson," he said, slowly, "you're dead right—*you're dead right*. I'll see it don't occur again."

"Thank you," said Churchill.

The Colonel gave the ministerial knee a friendly shake or two and after a pause continued. "Tell me, Parson, you surely ain't never going on as far as Camp Mary, are you?"

"Yes, and beyond."

"Now, Parson, let me tell you. Right there's where you're making a da—— a powerful big mistake. Camp Mary is allowed to be the goldurnedest, the—— all right, Parson! don't move; I've got a good cinch on my language this time—Camp Mary is allowed to be the livest, wide-awakest town this side of—— Why, Parson, you surely ain't going to give Camp Mary the go-by."

"I may stop there on my way back," replied Churchill.

It should be said here that Colonel Gilmore's description of Camp Mary was misleading. Moreover, the Colonel knew it. Camp Mary was the last spot on earth likely to conduce to the pleasure of a travelling minister of the gospel. It was made up largely of a drifting population of bullies, there one day, gone the next. Crime was so frequent as to be wholly unimpressive. A murderer "lit out" when the fancy took him, not because he was driven. Nobody drove him. If the town was rid of him, why, in the name of common sense, arrest him and bring him back? To be sure, other murderers from other towns "lit in"; but why not? Camp Mary was a haven to the oppressed. However, this state of affairs was not to continue—at least, so thought Colonel Dan Gilmore and a dozen or more other permanent and moderately reputable citizens of the town.

During the remainder of the ride the Colonel was silent, but as the stage lurched on into the twilight, a look of confidence took decided form upon his face. The twilight brought coolness. The road ran now on one side, now on another, of a river bed some quarter of a mile wide, down the centre of which minced a stream as large as a leak from a hose. Uprooted trees, under the hollow of whose bark the stream now found ample room to flow, were mute witnesses to the awful strength that this puny, shallow trickle had gained and would gain again. The banks were gorgeous with buckeye trees bending white beneath their load of heavy-perfumed flowers.

As twilight ceased and darkness fell, it became evident that Camp Mary

was near at hand. The scattered farms began to mass themselves, and children's voices could be heard. But the stage rolled along in the blackness. Its ligitimate stopping place, the store, was not yet reached.

At last the horses turned sharply and unerringly into a well-worn rut, and of their own accord broke into a lively run which soon ended within a gush of light pouring out from the door of the store itself. Forms emerged from the darkness, as well as from the light. The horses were unhitched and with their harnesses creaking upon them, trotted off into the night out of which came others to take their places.

The Colonel, with a kindly "Well, Parson, so long," had already alighted; followed by the Spanish priest, he was on his way to join a little knot of men that blurred the semi-darkness at the corner of the store. As he approached, a tall man came forward from the group to meet him.

"Well, Dan, what'd you get?" he asked in a low voice.

"Father Cuevas," replied Gilmore, with a jerk of the thumb over his shoulder. Then with a curt, "Stay there a minute," to the Spanish priest, he went on with the tall man to the group. "Boys, I've brought along a greaser minister, but I think we can do better."

"We hed sholy ought to ef we can," said a voice.

"That's so," said another. "I reckon he wouldn't go down very well with the boys."

"Out there in the stage," continued Gilmore, "there's a genuine, bed-rock minister—from the East. He allows he's going on further. I allow he'd ought to be persuaded to stop over and do the work, 'stead of the greaser." This met with general assent. "Well, then, Mac," the Colonel concluded, "I reckon you and me can persuade him. Come on."

As the two walked toward the stage they were in deep consultation which ended in Gilmore's saying, "Sure. We got to do it nice and gentle. I got stuff in him if he is a tenderfoot parson, I know." Then, as they reached the stage, "Well, Parson! Howdy again! Shake hands with my friend Sheriff McKinstry."

The driver was ready to start the horses for the journey onward. "Hold on a minute, Manuel," said Gilmore to him softly, "whilst the sheriff and me has a word with the Parson." Churchill had stepped out of the stage and had shaken hands. The three withdrew a few paces.

"Parson, it's this way," began the sheriff, in a level voice. "You see, there's two men here that need your prayers bad."

"Now?" asked Churchill.

"Well, yes—leastways, tonight, 'cause tomorrow they'll be dead—God's truth. You can see we ain't joking."

"Are they ill? Dying?" asked Churchill with real anxiety. A pause followed.

"Well, Dan," said the sheriff, "would you say they was sick, or—"

"Dying." Gilmore sighed as he answered; but there was no hesitation.

"And you are really sure they need my—that my prayers would comfort them?" asked Churchill.

After some hesitation Gilmore replied, "Well, it don't seem hardly the square thing to let 'em die 'thout—"

"Gentlemen, excuse me. I am ashamed of my hesitation. Certainly, I will go to them at once. Where are they?"

In two steps, Gilmore had reached the stage again. "Hand out the Parson's kit, you," he said to one of the Mexican laborers. "So long, Manuel." The stage rolled out into the night and the three men walked silently to the group by the corner of the store.

"Gentlemen," began Gilmore, "shake hands with Parson—— Excuse me, Parson, I didn't rightly get your name—Churchill? Thank you, sir. Gentlemen, shake hands with Parson Churchill." The ceremony was gone through with in dead silence broken at last by the sheriff's voice. "Well, I guess I better be moving. It's all right, Mr. Churchill. I'll see you again tomorrow."

"Just square that greaser minister will you, Mac?" called Gilmore, quietly, after the retreating figure. No one seemed disposed to speak or make a move. At last the young minister asked, "Shall we start at once and see these poor men?"

"Parson," replied Gilmore gravely, "these two poor men won't be just ready to see you for a matter of three hours."

"But you say they are dying," exclaimed Churchill with a touch of irritation.

"They'll be dead before sunrise, sure."

"Then why not go at once?" demanded Churchill. "This is no time for delays," he added sharply.

"Yes, 'tis, Parson. 'Deed it is. 'Twont do to go too early. That's straight, Parson." Gilmore spoke appealingly, but the minister was now thoroughly provoked.

"I don't understand this," he said. "And what is more, I don't like the looks of it. I tell you that plainly. Moreover, I am tired out and hungry, and in no mood to be trifled with. I shall go inside now. When you want me you can come in and find me."

Churchill turned on his heel and went into the store. Here he discovered that the building was store, post-office and hotel combined. So, after a meal, he engaged a room and lay down. He was soon sleeping soundly, after the tiresome journey of the day. At the end of perhaps a couple of hours he awakened suddenly with the knowledge that there were strange men in the room. He felt under his pillow for his revolver. It was gone.

"Here it is, Parson," said a voice and his weapon was put into his hand. "No cause for shooting. We're friends and are just getting ready-like for you."

Someone here lit the lamp and Churchill saw that the men in the room were those to whom Gilmore had introduced him.

"You see, Mr. Churchill," one of them said, "when you walked away, on your ear, with your temper all riled, we weren't huffed no more'n the dead. We said, 'Let Parson go and get some food in him and let him sleep some,' we said; 'for those actions just suit us down to the ground,' we

said; 'cause we need him in the middle of the night and it's sensibler for him to get food and rest instidder jawing with,' we said."

Churchill hesitated for a moment; then he said, "Very well. I am ready." Cautiously, almost like thieves, they made their way to the open air. Once outside they were joined by others until the party numbered fifteen or more. As they plodded stolidly on through the sleeping camp, on through the ragged hem of the settlement, not a word was spoken. At last a solitary building loomed in the dark stretch of waste, and without a sound the party halted. A voice which Churchill recognized as Gilmore's said:

"Now, boys! Softly. Right and left. This way, Mr. Churchill, please."

Churchill found himself part of a detachment that was noiselessly approaching the right side of the barn-like structure. As they drew nearer, he could see that a faint light was shining out from a single window. The men crouched, and hurrying forward, reached the window in a body, without a sound. Again came Gilmore's voice, now as crisp and resonant as if the time were midwinter:

"Throw up! We've got the drop."

Then, from the other side of the building, another voice, deep and full:

"Same here. You'd best be took peaceable."

Between the forms at the window Churchill saw into the building. Beside a table on which were glasses, a bottle and a pack of cards, stood two men. Each looked about him; each looked at the other; then each slowly raised his hands above his head. Churchill was the last to climb over the low window sill. The two men, their hands now tied behind them, stood facing a semicircle of stern, grave, inexorable faces. Gilmore spoke:

"Herman Rand, you murdered that Chinese woman in Nevada. You robbed the mail at Laramie. You knifed Dick Gallivan last week in Guadaloupe."

"What's that to you?" was the reply, coupled with a fearful oath. Gilmore did not answer. Instead, he turned and addressed the other of the two prisoners:

"Bob Shawn, we've got the dying confession of your partner Lesynsky, all down in writing. It's no use denying."

"Who's denying?" came the answer, surly and brazen.

"Gentlemen," said Gilmore to the others of his party; "proceed."

Ropes were immediately produced and placed about the necks of the condemned men. The minister of the gospel drew his revolver.

"Stop!" he said. "This thing has gone far enough. It stops here."

"No, Parson," said Gilmore, quietly but firmly; "no Parson. It goes right on." The young minister's eyes flashed, and his voice was cold and without a tremor.

"I will shoot the first man that moves," he said. There was silence for a moment, then Gilmore, pointing to the revolver in the minister's hand, said gravely:

"Not with that weapon, Parson."

Churchill examined his revolver. The cartridges had been removed. "Who has tampered with this?" he

demanded, with flashing eyes.

"Now, Parson," said Gilmore, "let me tell you how it was. Not having time to explain things to you, and thinking it just as likely as not that afore proper judgment you might go over to the wrong side and do damage, we fixed your weapon so as you mightn't do nothing with it to regret. These men has each of 'em done his ten or twenty crimes, any one of 'em enough to hang him for." Churchill interrupted hotly:

"Then let them be hanged by law. This is illegal."

"Mr. Churchill," continued Gilmore, "we are the legallest thing just now in this county. Things has got to be straightened out, and God helping us, we've got to do it. So stand aside, sir, or start in and pray; for that's what you're here for."

Without further words, the prisoners were placed on ladders and the ropes were fastened to the rafters above. Then from the pair broke forth piteous appeals, confessions of their hideous crimes, promises of reform, entreaties for freedom that they might go away to lead better lives. Moved by the only mercy the vigilantes knew, which was to end such suffering as soon as possible, two grave men stepped up to the ladders, and one said:

"Now, Mr. Churchill, pray."

Going to the condemned men, Churchill exhorted them to penitence, but now they realized that death was inevitable, their true natures returned, and out of bravado they shouted and sang indecencies. At last, in agony, Churchill cried:

"Oh, men! in your last breath have you nothing to say but this? Have you no wish that can be fulfilled? Think! All that can be done I will do for you."

"Will you grant my last wish?" asked the one called Herman Rand, looking about him. The vigilantes nodded. "Then give me another drink of that gin before I go," he demanded.

A growl of disgust went up and the man at Rand's ladder seemed about to end the proceedings at once; but Churchill said: "We promised," and put the glass in the wretch's hand.

"And you?" asked the minister of the man called Shawn.

"I want you to write a letter to my mother." Churchill took out a notebook and wrote at the man's dictation.

Mrs. Lizzie Arnold,
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Dear Mother:—

I am lying very sick of fever and the doctor says I will die. Ever since I left home I have been a good man for your sake and have lived a good life."

Churchill shut his book. "That will do," he said. "I will neither write nor send such a letter."

The man broke into sobs.

"Curse you! Do you think it's for my sake I want that said? Don't I know I ought to die and rot? What good's the lies to me? But if I don't send 'em the old woman will write and find out about me and then she'll live all the rest of her life in shame. Curse you, I say. Any white man would write for me, but it takes a —— Parson to be cursed particular about the truth at the wrong time."

The minister grew paler and re-

opened his book. "Go on," he said. The man continued:

"Every body is very kind to me while I am sick and I have everything I want. I send you my watch and ring. They are worth a great deal. And no more from your loving son.

James Arnold."

Both men here recommenced their horrible pleasantries and Churchill knew that their time had come. He kneeled and broke into passionate prayer. He heard the "One, two, three," counted, and understood that all was over. Somebody put out the candles, and the two figures could be seen swaying in the moonlight which poured in through the open windows.

"Come away," said Gilmore, hoarsely. "It's about time for the sheriff to be around."

The journey back to Camp Mary was as silent as the journey out. Churchill passed what remained of the night on his knees in his room at the hotel.

During the days in which he was obliged to wait for the stage to carry him on his way, Churchill kept much to himself. He knew that on the morning following that horrible night notices to quit had been served upon a number of the worst characters left in Camp Mary, and that within two hours every notice had been obeyed.

At last the stage arrived. The vigilantes were there in a body, Gilmore at their head. The minister came out of the open door. Gilmore stepped up to him, hat in hand, and said:

"Parson, we know how you feel, but—but it had to be done, Parson. It just naturally *had* to be *done*. We would be greatly pleased if you'd shake hands before you go, Parson. We would, sure."

"I am not going," said Churchill. "I intend to remain here." The vigilantes were speechless with amazement. Churchill continued: "I have come to the conclusion that I can do more good here than I can in the East."

Gilmore caught him by the hand and wrung it.

"By the Eternal God, Parson," he said, reverently, "we'll back you to the limit."

"We will," came in a deep-voiced chorus from the others.

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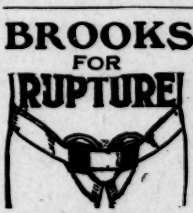

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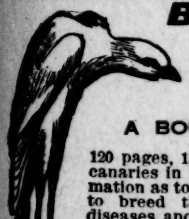

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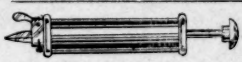

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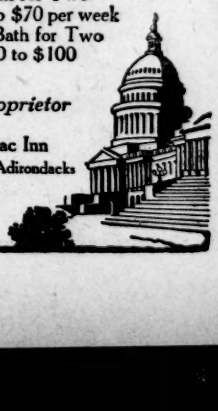
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